

Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine \$5.99

PENGUIN EGGS

Lhasa

Pete Seeger

The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir

The Great Uncles of the Revolution

A Man Called Wrycraft

Charbonniers de l'Enfer

Djelimady Tounkara

Evalyn Parry

Arlene Bishop

Connie Kaldor

Terry Clarke

Tanglefoot

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Issue No. 20
Winter 2003



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OLD MAN RIVERBEND FISHBOWL
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Cover story

28...After recording her 1997, Juno Award-winning, *La Lloronda*, and touring with Lilith Fair, Lhasa burned out. She vanished but wound up singing in a circus in France accompanied by a trapeze artist who played accordion and a juggler who picked guitar. Once revitalized, she returned to Montreal to record her phenomenal new release, *The Living Road*.

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Cover Photo: By ChrisTina Alonso

Quotable

"Folk would come in, lock themselves in a booth, put a quarter in a slot, and watch women take their clothes off. When I started they were taking in 23,000 quarters a week; with my marketing ideas in place, they were up to 38,000 quarters a week by the time I left. . . I think they still use the logo I created for them, of a happy face with swirling eyes and the line 'Have an erotic day'." — Juno Award-winning album cover designer, Michael Wrycraft

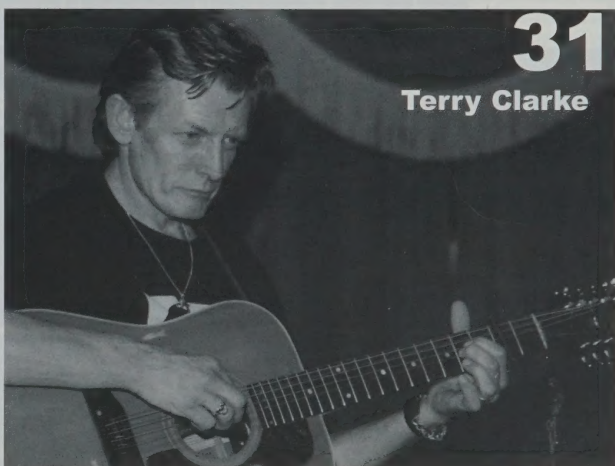
"You know what John Steinbeck said about Woody's voice: 'It's like a tire-iron hanging on a rusty nail,'" — Pete Seeger recalls Woody Guthrie.

Sheet Music

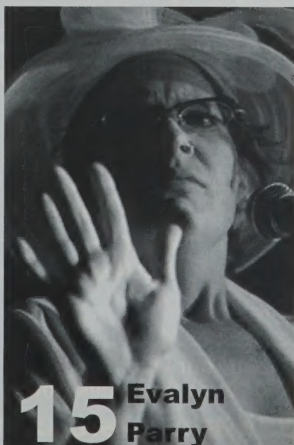
- 56** . . . Hold Your Ground. —
By James Keelaghan



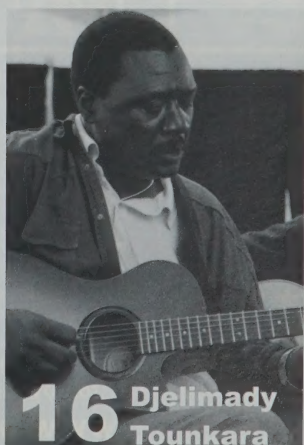
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Kevin Turcotte

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Steve Dawson

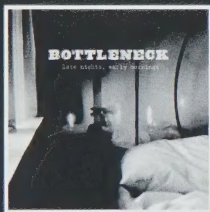
Blow The House Down features 8 new original compositions and a cunning arrangement of the Prokofiev classic Peter and the Wolf.

Winners of the 'Grand Prix de Jazz' at the 2002 Montreal Jazz Festival

Winners of West Coast Music Award in 2002 for 'Best Instrumental Album'

Nominated for the National Jazz Awards 'Acoustic Group of 2002'

Three of the four members of the quartet also nominated for the same award on their respective instruments, with two of them winning.



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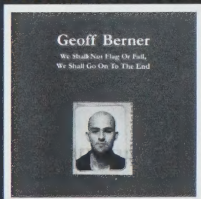
— The Calgary Sun

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— Exclaim!



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We Shall Go On To The End



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— Toronto's EYE Weekly

"We Shall Not Flag Or Fail is surprising, intelligent, funny and sad."

— Exclaim Magazine



LINDA McRAE
and Cheerful Lonesome
Cryin' Out Loud

McRae's warmly powerful voice is the bedrock of this album. With one foot in the real world and one in Western folklore, Cryin' Out Loud proves that being well-balanced and interesting aren't musically exclusive.

— No Depression,
US Roots Magazine



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— Comes With A Smile UK

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy. Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982. He has never fully recovered and now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs* is available through Topic Records in Europe and Shanachie in North America.

Penguin Eggs is published and printed in Canada with generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts.



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editorial

I recently pitched a profile piece about a seriously talented Canadian songwriter to a renowned European roots magazine. 'Sorry,' came the polite reply from the man in charge, 'we've stopped covering singer-songwriters.' I almost choked on my porridge. The nerve. But as the novelty wore off I thought, 'Fair enough. You have a rich history of traditional music and ever increasing access to an endless seam of invigorating world music. Why not. Go for it.'

In certain European circles singer-songwriters are not considered folk musicians. And in many cases, I totally agree. But before anyone jumps into the old unsolvable 'What is folk?' argument, my correspondence coincided with a visit to the wonderfully organised Ontario Council of Folk Festivals annual convention in Sudbury. There Penguin Eggs had a booth in the same hall as the youth showcases. The numerous brief sets there, however, proved a huge disappointment, offering nothing beyond angst-inspired introspection. Not that the showcases for the more experienced singer-songwriters were without criticism either. All too frequently, it was possible to predict within the opening chords what would follow.

Now I'm not singling out the OCF, because the youth stage at Winnipeg folk festival this past summer offered exactly the same fare. And good for both of these organisations for providing such forums for developing talent. They are sorely needed. While the experience factor is highly commendable, what about the music? Which is what it's all about at the end of the day. Somebody screened these musicians and singers. And obviously there were guidelines. But it does seem rather perverse that youth showcases run by folk festivals require no acknowledgment of traditional music. At the very least, a policy that includes a folk factor in a presentation seems a reasonable request. Just think of the benefits gained by absorbing the time-tested storytelling structure of traditional ballads.

Bob Dylan wrote many of his greatest songs inspired by the tradition. Imagine no *Blowin' In The Wind*, *Masters of War* or *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* — his bitter, thought-provoking responses to the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis in the sixties. Folk and roots at their best chronicle our times. But as rampant global atrocities continue on a daily basis, our fledgling songwriters insist on insipid confessions. Just think, forty years from now the folk tradition could consist of *Sometimes When We Touch* instead of *If I Had A Rocket Launcher*. Scary.

— Roddy Campbell

5

PENGUIN
EGGS
Winter
2003

Editorial

festival top 20

1. Various Artists
2. Po' Girl
3. Ruthie Foster
4. Various Artists
5. Ani DiFranco
6. Connie Kaldor
7. Eric & Leon Bibb
8. Ricky Skaggs
9. Stan Rogers
10. Harry Manx
11. Hary Manx & Kevin Breit
12. Arrogant Worms
13. DuOud
14. Del McCoury Band
15. Guy Davis
16. Ron Hynes
17. Stan Rogers
18. Chris Smither
19. Harry Manx
20. Ruthie Foster

Compiled from September and October sales by Festival Distribution – the largest distributor of independent labels in Canada

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Beautiful | (Borealis/North) |
| Po' Girl | (Jericho Beach) |
| Runaway Soul | (Blue Corn) |
| Johnny's Blues | (NorthernBlues) |
| Evolve | (Righteous Babe) |
| Vinyl Songbook | (Coyote) |
| A Family Affair | (Jericho Beach) |
| Live | (Festival) |
| Home In Halifax | (Fogerty's Cove) |
| Wise And Otherwise | (NorthernBlues) |
| Jubilee | (NorthernBlues) |
| Semi Conducted | (Artistown) |
| Wild Serenade | (Label Blue) |
| It's Just The Night | (Sugar Hill) |
| Chocolate to the Bone | (Red House) |
| Get Back Change | (Borealis) |
| Fogerty's Cove | (Fogerty's Cove) |
| Train Home | (Highline) |
| Dog My Cat | (NorthernBlues) |
| Crossover | (Blue Corn) |



The Arrogant Worms

megatunes top 10

1. Emmylou Harris
2. Various Artists
3. Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez
4. Dixie Hummingbirds
5. Van Morrison
6. Lyle Lovett
7. Eric Bibb
8. Petra Haden & Bill Frisell
9. Ruthie Foster
10. Steve Winwood

Compiled from September and October sales at Megatunes, 10355 Whyte Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T2T 0A2

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Stumble Into Grace | (Nonesuch) |
| Beautiful | (Borealis/North) |
| Let's Leave This Town | (Lone Star) |
| Diamond Jubilation | (Rouder) |
| What's Wrong...? | (Blue Note) |
| My Baby Don't Tolerate | (Lost Highway) |
| Natural Light | (Earthbeat) |
| Petra Haden & Bill Frisell | (True North) |
| Full Circle | (Wama Member) |
| About Time | (Sci Fidelity) |



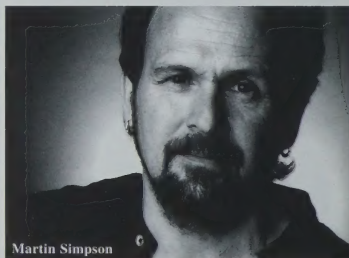
Emmylou Harris

moondance top 10

1. Various Artists
2. Po' Girl
3. Hary Manx & Kevin Breit
4. The Be Good Tanyas
5. Scruggs, Watson and Skaggs
6. Alison Krauss & Union Station
7. Blackie and the Rodeo Kings
8. Buddy Guy
9. Various Artists
10. Martin Simpson

Compiled from September and October sales at Moondance, 425 George St. N., Peterborough, ON., K9H 3R4

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Beautiful | (Borealis/North) |
| Po' Girl | (Festival) |
| Jubilee | (NorthernBlues) |
| Chinatown | (Netwerk) |
| Three Pickers | (Rouder) |
| Live | (Rouder) |
| Bark | (True North) |
| Blues Singer | (Silvertone) |
| Shout, Sister, Shout! | (Stony Plain) |
| Righteousness and Humidity | (Red House) |



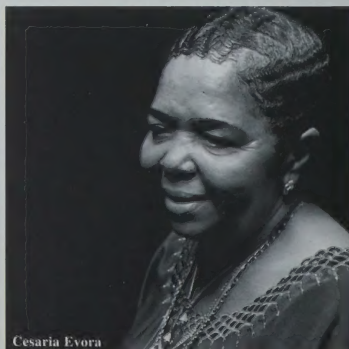
Martin Simpson

ckua top 15

1. Thea Gilmore
2. Various Artists
3. Colin James
4. Emmylou Harris
5. Cesaria Evora
6. Jen Kraatz
7. Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez
8. Jeff Buckley
9. Pancho Sanchez
10. Buck 65
11. Michael Franti & Spearhead
12. Jesse Cook
13. Wayfarin' Strangers
14. Various Artists
15. Rodney Crowell

Compiled from September and October total plays at CKUA Radio, 580 AM in Alberta.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Avalanche | (Compass) |
| Shout, Sister, Shout! | (Stony Plain) |
| Traveller | (Warner) |
| Stumble Into Grace | (Nonesuch) |
| Voz d'Amor | (BMG) |
| Ashes | (Independent) |
| Trouble With Humans | (Train Wreck) |
| Live at Sin-E | (Sony) |
| Out of Sight | (Koch) |
| Talkin' Honky Blues | (Warner) |
| Everyone Deserves Music | (BooBoo Wax) |
| Normal | (Narada) |
| This Train | (Rouder) |
| Beautiful | (Borealis/North) |
| Fate's Right Hand | (Epic) |



Cesaria Evora

galliard top 10

1. Lunasa
2. Shooglenifty
3. Gerardo Nuñez et al
4. Mike Marshall & Chris Thile
5. Blue Murder
6. The Amestoy Trio
7. Parissa
8. Iren Lovasz & Teagrass
9. Samir Joubran
10. David Grisman & Sam Bush

Compiled from September and October sales at Galliard Music, 101 - 3 Fan Tan Alley, Victoria, BC, V8W 3G9

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Redwood | (Green Linnet) |
| The Arms Dealer's Daughter | (Compass) |
| The New School of Flamenco | (The Act) |
| Into The Cauldron | (Compass) |
| No One Stands Alone | (Topic) |
| Le Fil | (Daqui) |
| Enchanting Voice Of Iran | (Network) |
| Wide Is The Danube | (CCn'C) |
| Tamaas | (Daqui) |
| Hang On We're Strummin' | (Acoustic Disc) |

rose top 10

1. Jesse Cook
2. Eva Cassidy
3. Various Artists
4. Bruce & Debbie Bergman
5. Undertakin' Daddies
6. Eva Cassidy
7. Norah Jones
8. Kim Barlow
9. Johnny Cash
10. Gillian Welch

Compiled from September and October sales at Rose Music, 4137A 4th Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 1H8

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Normal | (Narada) |
| American Tune | (Bliz Street) |
| The Caribou Collection Vol. 2 | (Caribou) |
| It's About Time | (Independent) |
| Devil In The Rearview | (Caribou) |
| Songbird | (Bliz Street) |
| Come Away With Me | (Blue Note) |
| Gingerbread | (Caribou) |
| American IV | (Lost Highway) |
| Soul Journey | (Stony Plain) |

music top 10

1. Various Artists
2. Hary Manx & Kevin Breit
3. Blackie and the Rodeo Kings
4. Ray Bonneville
5. Creaking Tree String Quartet
6. Wailin' Jennies
7. Le Vent du Nord
8. The Wyrd Sisters
9. Fred Eaglesmith
10. Lucie Idlout

Compiled from September and October sales at Music, 263 Huron Rd., Sebringville, ON, N0K 1X0

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Beautiful | (Borealis/Northern) |
| Jubilee | (Northern Blues) |
| Bark | (True North) |
| Roll It Down | (Stony Plain) |
| Creaking Tree String Quartet | (Independent) |
| Wailin' Jennies | (Independent) |
| Maudite Maison | (Borealis) |
| Sin And Other Salvations | (Independent) |
| Balin' | (A Major Label) |
| My Mother's Name | (Arbor Records) |

highlife top 10

1. Michael Franti & Spearhead
2. The Be Good Tanyas
3. Lhasa
4. D.J. i Sabbah
5. Gillian Welch
6. Gigi
7. Emmylou Harris
8. Various Artists
9. Po' Girl
10. Lucinda Williams

Compiled from September and October sales at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Everyone Deserves Music | (BacBoo Wax) |
| Chinatown | (Network) |
| The Living Road | (Audiogramme) |
| As Far As | (Six Degrees) |
| Soul Journey | (Stony Plain) |
| Illuminated Audio | (Palm Pictures) |
| Stumble Into Grace | (Nonesuch) |
| Verve Remix 2 | (Universal) |
| Po' Girl | (Festival) |
| World Without Tears | (Lost Highway) |

soundscapes top 10

1. Neil Young
2. Emmylou Harris
3. Gillian Welch
4. Various Artists
5. Lhasa
6. Lyle Lovett
7. Josh Rouse
8. Band of Blacky Ranchette
9. Rosie Thomas
10. Various Artists

Compiled from September and October sales at Soundscapes, 572 College St, Toronto ON, M6G 1B3

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| On The Beach | (Reprise) |
| Stumble Into Grace | (Nonesuch) |
| Soul Journey | (Stony Plain) |
| Beautiful | (Borealis/Northern) |
| The Living Road | (Audiogramme) |
| My Baby Don't Tolerate | (Lost Highway) |
| 1972 | (Ryodisc) |
| Still Lokin' Good To Me | (Thrill Jockey) |
| Only With Laughter... | (Sub Pop) |
| Down In The Basement | (Old Hat) |

tim harrison



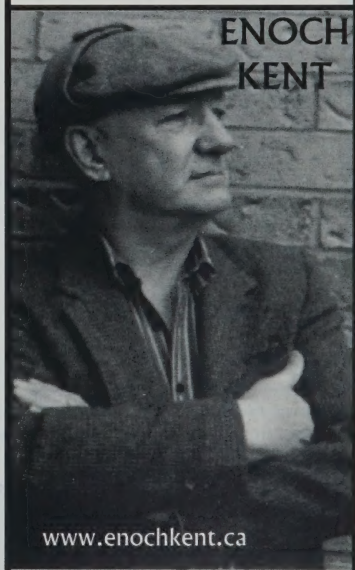
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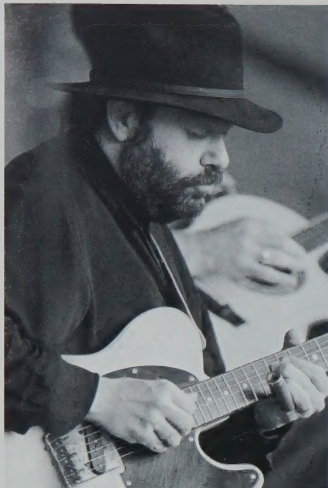


Photo By: Angela Browne Colin Linden: Movie star

Colin Linden, founding member of the Juno award-winning trio **Blackie & the Rodeo Kings**, is set to make his acting debut as **Father Scott**, a guitar-playing priest, in the movie *Intolerable Cruelty* by Oscar award-winning filmmakers **Ethan and Joel Coen**.

Linden also contributed two **Simon and Garfunkel** songs *April Comes She Will* and *The Boxer* to the movie soundtrack. This is Linden's second collaboration with the Coen Brothers. In 2000, he contributed *Hard Time Killing Floor Blues* to the award-winning score for the film *O' Brother Where Art Thou?* Subsequently, he toured with many of the musicians from the soundtrack, including performing on the offshoot *Down From the Mountain* at the legendary Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. That concert was eventually released as a film.

Intolerable Cruelty is the story of a fabulously successful Los Angeles divorce attorney, **Miles Massey (George Clooney)**. Sated on success, he is seeking new shallowness when he meets the much-divorced **Marilyn Rexroth (Catherine Zeta-Jones)**, a hard-headed woman pursuing financial independence through serial matrimony. **Blackie & the Rodeo Kings (Colin Linden, Stephen Fearing, and Tom Wilson)** will launch a National Canadian tour in November.

★ ★ ★

Chuck Brodsky's song *Radio* inspired and provided the title for the latest movie starring **Cuba Gooding Jr., Ed Harris and Debra Winger**. It tells the touching story of an outcast, mentally-challenged, young African-American man who years ago was befriended by the high school football coach and eventually the entire town of Anderson, S.C., the small community where the story takes place.

The writer and director of the film discovered *Radio* during their story research and gave the North Carolina-based folksinger a walk on part

in the movie and invited him (along with Gooding, Harris and Winger) to perform the title cut at the movie's premiere, October 24. Since recording the song in 1998, Brodsky has maintained a relationship with Coach Jones and **James Robert Kennedy** (a.k.a. Radio) and has been invited to perform at the high school's homecoming football game.

★ ★ ★

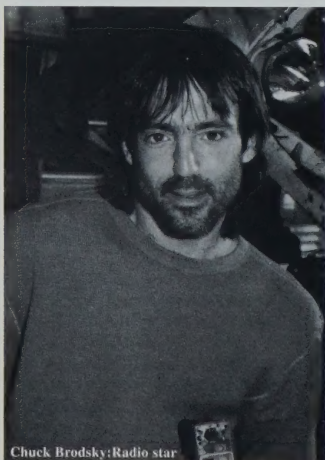
The first six inductees into the Canadian Folk Music Walk of Fame are **Jean Carignan, Helen Creighton, Bruce Cockburn, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell and Stan Rogers**. Each had a bronze plaque embedded in their honour in the sidewalk on Bank Street in Ottawa. The plaques were unveiled October 4.

Quebec fiddler Carignan received the Order of Canada for his highly-individual style of playing at such prestigious venues as the Newport Folk Festival and Carnegie Hall. Creighton pioneered the collecting of folk songs in Canada. Her discoveries included *Farewell To Nova Scotia*. Singer-songwriters Lightfoot and Mitchell enjoyed tremendous international success throughout the '60s and '70s with hits like *The Wreck of The Edmund Fitzgerald* and *Big Yellow Taxi*. Rogers is celebrated for his pioneering body of work based largely in traditional roots. Further inductees will be allotted plaques in 2004.

★ ★ ★

After 19 years as music programmer at Toronto's Harbourfront, **Derek Andrews** contract was terminated, September 25. The widely respected Andrews was informed through a terse letter that the nonprofit corporation no longer required his services.

"It was pretty cold and rude after the 19 years I invested," said Andrews. "I use the metaphor of it as a child I raised and have it taken away from me." Andrews' lawyer filed a wrongful dismissal suit for him October 2. Local musicians such as **Madagascar Slim** and **Jane Burnett** have rallied round to perform benefits for Andrews' legal defense fund.



Chuck Brodsky: Radio star



Helen Creighton: Canadian Folk Walk of Fame

During his tenure, Andrews brought countless world music, roots, blues, folk and jazz musicians to Harbourfront. He was responsible for WOMAD's presence in Toronto. Indeed, he brought many world music performers such as **The Drummers of Burundi** and **Orchestra Boabob** to Canada for the first time.

"I was able to awaken and engage audiences in new things they could appreciate like world music. I was able to break down stereotypes and expose people to music they might not normally appreciate."

Andrews is currently the president of the Toronto Blues Society, the President of Folk Alliance Canada and the sole North American consultant for the European Forum of World Music Festivals. He will program the Strictly Mundial convention which will run in conjunction with the North American Folk Alliance to be held in Montreal in 2005.

★ ★ ★

The 2003 National Fingerpicking Championship title at the Walnut Valley Music Festival in Winfield, Kansas, USA, went to **Bob Evans** of Regina, Saskatchewan. The competition, established in 1979, draws guitarists from around the world. **Masaaki Kishibe** of Japan placed second this year and **Mary Flower** of Colorado placed third. This was the second year Evans competed at Winfield, having placed third last year. He is only the second Canadian to have won the title. Previously, **Don Ross** won it in both 1988 and 1996, the only guitarist ever to have won twice. Bob's current CD release of fingerstyle guitar compositions, *Caffeinated Coffee*, was awarded Outstanding Instrumental Album at the 2000 Prairie Music Awards. His new recording, *The Voice in the Grain*, is set for release in January.

★ ★ ★

Canadian songwriters placed in all four of the top prizes in the Country/Folk category of the recent Unisong International Song Contest.



Miranda Stone: Songs From The Heart Winner

David Leask from Mississauga, Ontario, along with co-writers **Kristi Magraw** and **Robert Davis**, took first place for their song *Five Minutes*. Leask also placed second for *Can you Cry* which he co-wrote with **Debra Alexander** from New Hampshire. **Lisa Sodeberg** from Toronto placed third with *Lonely As I've Been*. And **Giasone Italiano** from Waterloo, Ontario, came in fourth with his *Home (A Soldier's Song)*.

There were over 850 entries. Leask has released two CD's, *100 Camels* and *Ancestors Eyes*. Leask released his third CD, *Tightrope of Dreams*, in November. It includes *Five Minutes*.

★ ★ ★

Toronto-based songwriter **Evalyn Parry** is the first recipient of the Colleen Peterson Songwriting Award for her song, *The Stone and The Bumblebee*. The daughter of the late **David Parry** of **The Friends of Fiddlers Green**, Evalyn received a \$1,000 cheque at the recent Ontario Council of Folk Festivals' October conference in Sudbury. This new award honouring the late singer-songwriter **Colleen Peterson's** contribution to Canadian folk and country music has recently been established to support and promote the work of Ontario-resident, emerging songwriters in the genres of roots, traditional, folk and country music. *The Stone and The Bumblebee* was chosen by an Ontario Arts Council selection panel from nominations put forward by the OCF's Songs from the Heart competition. Colleen's sister, **Shirley Richardson** and singer-songwriter **Laura Bird** spearheaded the various fundraising events that led to the establishment of the award.

This year's Songs from the Heart contest winner was **Miranda Stone** for her song *Seven Deadly Sins*. The OCF received 270 entries for the competition. First prize earned Stone a \$1,000 cheque and a showcase slot in Sudbury. *Seven Deadly Sins* is the title track of her 2002 debut album. **Susan O (Woe)**, **Steve Fox (She Moved)** and **Rob Lamothe (River Of My Life)** received honorable mentions.

★ ★ ★

Ontario singer-songwriter **Lynn Harrison** has been commissioned to write a song to mark the 15th anniversary of Trinity Home Hospice, a Toronto-based organization that provides skilled, compassionate care to people with terminal illnesses who choose to die at home. Her song **Home Again** will make its public debut in a live performance at Toronto's Gardiner Museum on November 15th, 2003. The recording (produced by **David Woodhead**) will be used in ongoing awareness-raising activities.

★ ★ ★

The North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance has announced the selections for official artists showcases at its 16th annual conference, February 26-29, 2004, at the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center in San Diego, California. The list includes Canadians **The Arrogant Worms**, **Les Charbonniers de l'enfer**, **David Francey** and **James Keelaghan**.

★ ★ ★

After thirty-two seasons as house band for the Calgary Folk Club [see P.E. issue No 12], **The Wild Colonial Boys** will step back and let local singer-songwriter **Tom Wilson** (not to be confused with Tom Wilson of Blackie & The Rodeo Kings) take over as host on alternative club nights. "This change in format," explains club founder and band member, **Mansel Davis**, "will give us a much needed break and open the club up to a greater variety of music." The Wild Colonial Boys have opened over 400 club nights for some of the best international performers in the folk and roots world. Featured artists at the folk club this season include **David Francey** with **Dave Clarke**, **Laura Love Duo**, **Tom Russell** with **Andrew Hardin**.

★ ★ ★

The Toronto Blues Society postponed its second Blues Summit originally slated for January 17-19, 2004. Launched last year to coincide with the Toronto Blues Society's annual awards gala, the summit brought together blues musicians, agents, record companies, promoters, festival and venue presenters, media and fans from across Canada and the United States.

"As a largely volunteer organization the TBS feels that we will better serve the community with our resources well-managed for a bi-annual approach. Fundraising and sponsorship strategies are requiring a longer critical path," said Toronto Blues

Society President, **Derek Andrews**

★ ★ ★

The Great Canadian Ukulele Expo one-day conference will take place May 8th, 2004 at the William Glesby Centre in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. The conference will feature a vendor display, a strum-along session, beginner and advanced ukulele workshops and an evening concert featuring **Jim Beloff**, **Ralph Shaw**, **James Hill**, **Judy Cook** and **Manitoba Hal & The Incombustible Men**. For more information go to www.manitoba-hal.com/ukulele

★ ★ ★

Accordions have invaded the Internet, apparently. The Accordion Freedom Forum offers song files and an educational material section for free sheet music and midi files. The site encourages questions and answers and welcomes contributions from experts. To join the discussion visit the Yahoo website at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AccordionFreedomForum/> and click 'Join This Group'.

★ ★ ★

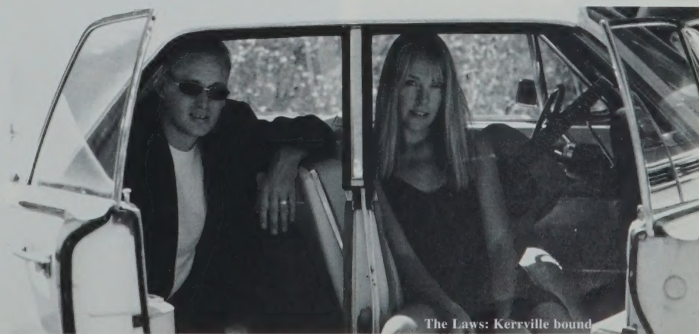
Vancouver Island dobro and slide guitarist **Doug Cox** has formed a partnership with former Disney corporation DVD programmer, **Chris Manuel**. Cox and Manuel purchased learnaousticguitar.com, learnelectricguitar.com and learnbassguitar.com and will produce instructional videos on blues, rockabilly, swing and slide guitar as well as slap acoustic bass. Their instructors will include **David Gogo**, **Tim Williams**, **The Bebop Cowboys**, **Paul Pigat (Cousin Harley)** and **Pete Turland**.

★ ★ ★

Jez Lowe and **The Bad Pennies**, **James Keelaghan** and **Kristina Olsen** embarked on a 15-date, November, UK tour, playing as a six piece. They received financial support from the UK Arts Council. There is some talk of the collaboration transferring to Canada.

The Bill Hilly Band won the Outstanding Roots Recording Award at the Western Canadian Music Awards held in Regina, September 25th to 28th, for *All Day Every Day*. The Bills head to the studio early in 2004 to record the follow up

The Laws spent September in Texas playing at such legendary venues as Gruene Hall and Cactus



The Laws: Kerrville bound

Cafe. As a result of their showcases at the South West Regional Folk Alliance in Austin, The Laws have been invited to perform on the main stage at The Kerrville Folk Festival, May 2004. They have also just put together a cookbook, *The Laws - Live and Cookin'*. It's a combination of recipes, road stories and songs and is available on their website, www.thelaws.ca

★ ★ ★

The 7th annual Maple Blues Awards takes place on January 19, 2004, at The Phoenix Concert Theatre, 410 Sherbourne Street, Toronto. This year, there are 89 nominations in 17 categories. The categories and nominees include Entertainer of the Year: **Morgan Davis**, David Gogo, Jack de Keyser, Harry Manx, Dawn Tyler Watson; Electric Act of the Year:

Glamour Puss, David Gogo, Jack de Keyser, David Rotundo, The Twisters; Acoustic Act of the Year: **Ray Bonneville**, Michael Jerome Browne, Hot Toddy, Harry Manx, Big Dave MacLean; New Artist of the Year: **Charlie A'Court**, Blue Voodoo, Jimmy Bowskill, Boobie Browne & the Onions, Rockit 88 Band, Peter Schmidt & Shane Scott; International Artist of the Year: **Solomon Burke**, Corey Harris, Magic Slim, Robert Randolph, Duke Robillard; Recording of the Year: Morgan Davis: *Painkiller* (ElectroFi), Glamour Puss: *Wire & Wood* (NorthernBlues), David Gogo: *Skeleton Key* (Cordova Bay), Harry Manx & Kevin Breit: *Jubilee* (NorthernBlues), The Twisters: *Long Hard Road* (Independent); Blues With a Feeling Award (Toronto Blues Society Lifetime Achievement Award): **Mel Brown**, Alec Fraser, Tom Lavin, Colin Linden, Big Dave Maclean, Jackie Richardson, Ken Whiteley, Terry Wilkins.

Nominees were chosen by an independent panel of blues radio personalities and music journalists across Canada. The winners are chosen from votes solicited from blues fans across the country.

The Blues Booster of the Year award, honouring

an outstanding blues industry contributor, will go to **Elaine Bomberry**. Bomberry is an Aboriginal arts activist, concert promoter and radio producer. A staunch advocate of Aboriginal blues musicians, Bomberry is the Producer of the Rez Bluez showcase concerts. She was also instrumental in the creation of the Best Music of Aboriginal Canada category for the JUNO Awards.

Maple Blues Awards tickets are \$28 for the public and \$20 for TBS members. Tickets are available through TicketMaster at 416-870-8000, www.ticketmaster.ca or the TBS office at 416-538-3885 or 1-866-871-9457; info@torontobluesociety.com.

★ ★ ★

The 2nd Annual Furry Folk Festival will run Thursday, March 25, 2004 at Hughs Room in Toronto. All proceeds will go to the Ontario SP-CA. **Danny Bakan** will host the event. Organisers are looking for musicians interested in donating their time to play the event. For further information, **Tracy Harrison** can be reached at folk@art-byharrison.com.

Still with Hugh's Room: **Trevor Mills** hosts The New Foundation Monthly Show there and invites songwriters to write a new song on a theme to be performed with a house band at a pay-what-you-can concert. The event is geared towards local emerging and established songwriters, as well as touring artists passing through Toronto. See www.thenewfoundation.ca for further details.

★ ★ ★

New off the presses in the UK is Blyth Voices – Folk Songs collected in Southwold by **Ralph Vaughan Williams** in 1910 from the Haughley, near Stowmarket, Suffolk-based East Anglian Music Trust. Imminent is the long overdue republishing of *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* by the English Folk Dance and Song Society. A mini-Bible of a book, it originally appeared in 1959, edited by **Vaughan Williams** and **A.L. Lloyd**. Long out-of-print, it has been re-edited by **Malcolm Douglas** and **Martin Carthy** has written a new preface for it. It even has a new

name: *The Classic Book of English Folk Songs*.

Shirley Collins is at the final stages of re-working on her account of her travels with Alan Lomax in the Southern States of America in 1959. The book, to be called *America Over The Water* is to be published by the London-based Helter Skelter publishing house (and bookshop) in 2004.

Also scheduled for 2004 is **Britta Sweets'** self-explanatory *Electric Folk: Revival and Transformation of English Traditional Music* from Oxford University Press. Rumours have it that it will receive a North American publication before the UK.

★ ★ ★

Boston's **Dropkick Murphys** are the latest band to record **Woodie Guthrie's** unpublished lyrics. The self-described punk unit received an invitation from Woody's daughter, **Nora Guthrie**, to sift through the thousands of lyrics in the Guthrie archives. **Billy Bragg** and **Wilco**, of course, recorded the memorable *Mermaid Avenue* discs, *Volume I and II*, from the same source.

So why would Nora Guthrie choose a punk band to record her father's lyrics? "Her son is a punk rock fan, that would be Woody's grandson. I think she was told that we may have been cut from the same cloth," bassist **Ken Casey** told the San Diego Union Tribune. "The initial thing that put (Dropkick Murphys and Woody Guthrie) together was we both write a lot about organized labor."

Casey's trawl through the archives produced a Dropkick Murphys' recording of *Going to Be a Blackout Tonight*, a song about air raids during World War II. It's the title track of the their latest release, *Blackout*

★ ★ ★

The first Scottish Traditional Music Awards were held in the Queen's City Hall in Edinburgh in September. The categories and winners include: Best Scots Singer: **Karine Polwart**; Best Gaelic Singer: **Karen Matheson (Capercaillie)**; Best Album: **Cliar**; Best Live Act: **Battlefield Band**; Best Folk Band: **Capercaillie**; Best Up And Coming Artist or Band: **Back Of The Moon**.



Big Dave MacLean: Toronto Blues Society Honours



The Dropkick Murphys raided the Woody Guthrie Archives

Johnny Cash: 1932 - 2003

"Hello, I'm Johnny Cash," he said opening *Johnny Cash at Madison Square Garden* (recorded in 1969, but only released in 2002) and goodness knows how many other concerts. As statements of the bleeding obvious go, it was peerless. Some voices soar. Others canter or gallop. Johnny Cash's singing baritone barely crept above a gentle amble most of the time. It made for one of the most distinctive, most individual voices that popular music – let alone country music and Christendom – ever turned loose on the world. Part reflective of the American Dream, more often than not reflecting the American nightmare, Cash was at the fibrillating heart of the American condition. John R. Cash, also nicknamed the Man in Black died of complications of diabetes on 12 September, aged 71. Cash was born in "the flat, black delta land in Arkansas" on 26 February 1932. His father Ray Cash was a sharecropper and cotton dominated their lives. Cash drew on this dirt poor background for later material such as *Five Feet High And Rising* and *Pickin' Time* and made the life and hard times of the people the bedrock of much of his repertoire.

After time in a car factory, Cash enlisted with the USAF. While barracked in Landsberg in West Germany, he wrote *Folsom Prison Blues*. On his return home, he married, worked as a salesman and fell into playing music with **Marshall Grant** on bass and **Luther Perkins** on electric guitar. They picked **Johnny Cash And The Tennessee Two** as their name, impressed **Sam Phillips** enough for him to sign them to Sun Records in 1955 and that was the start of everything. *Cry, Cry, Cry* with *Hey Porter* on the B-side was the first hit: then he pulled out *Folsom Prison Blues*, *I Walk The Line*, *Big River* and more. There was no doubting that a talent had arrived. Sun's first LP was *Johnny Cash With His Hot And Blue Guitar*. It proved Cash's first and last for the label because he defected to Columbia in 1958 after Phillips balked at upping his royalty rates, let alone a second LP.

Cash hit pay dirt right away with the single *Don't Take Your Guns To Town* and his first Columbia album *The Fabulous Johnny Cash* (1959). Before he knew it, he was promoting himself in the grand treadmill manner, doing, it is said, 300 gigs a year. He turned to popping amphetamines. Nobody mentioned the payback. Cash's output was prodigious but also patchy, padded out and inclined to preachiness. He had begun to believe his own publicity, smoked a forest, drove a tractor into a lake, got rumbled at the border with a collection of Mexican speed, and scuppered his marriage.

In 1961 the **Carter Family** had gone on the road with Cash. **June Carter** (1929-2003) caught his eye and he hers. Her *Ring of Fire*, co-written with **Merle Kilgore**, testifies to the perils of wedlock. After proposing to her on stage show-biz-style in London, Ontario, they married in 1968. Pharmaceutical righteousness gave way to its religious namesake. Both their lives took a turn for the better and by 1969 Cash's nationally networked ABC-TV series, *The Johnny Cash Show* was picking up plaudits and ratings. **Louis Armstrong**,

Mahalia Jackson, **The Who**, **Stevie Wonder** and **Neil Young** dropped by to pay their respects. As did **Bob Dylan**. Cash reciprocated with a cameo appearance on Dylan's somewhat misunderstood *Nashville Skyline* (1969) and penned its sleeve notes in his marginal time. The period also saw Cash's return to LP form with *Johnny Cash at San Quentin* (which included 'A Boy Named Sue').

He signed to Mercury, producing the fine *Johnny Cash Is Coming To Town* (1987). A stint of painkiller vacation time, chez Betty Ford, and a heart bypass operation caused a career hiatus. But he did it again and bounced back with the Grammy-winning *American Recordings* (1994). Much of the rest of his career was afterglow. After his wife's death in May, already ailing and knowing his time was nigh, he threw himself into a career retrospective boxed set. One short-listed song is **Bob Marley's** *Redemption Song* done as a duet with **Joe Strummer**. **Roseanne Cash** is his daughter from his marriage to **Vivian Liberto** while **Carlene Cash** is his daughter from his second marriage.

Warren Zevon: 1947 - 2003

A maker of drolleries, a portraitist of the American Dream in disintegration, **Warren William Zevon** died in Los Angeles on 7 September. Cancer got him, but he wrung wryness even out of that situation, turning declining health into song fodder such as *My Shirt's Fucked Up*, *Macgillycuddy's Reels* and *Don't Let Us Get Sick for Life 'll Kill You* (2000). Zevon was born in Chicago on 24 January 1947 of mixed Russian-Jewish (his father's family's name had been Zevotovsky) and Welsh-Scottish stock. His father was a professional gambler, a boxer and, as he put it in one interview, a gangster. To go cod-psychologist, the eccentricities and alarming subject matter of his finest songs were born out in this maelstrom. (Drugs and alcohol assisted too.) His early songs, whether as part of **Lyme** and **Cybele** or solo, had flashes of success. **The Turtles** covered a couple.

She Quit Me got into the Midnight Cowboy soundtrack (1969). The songs that made his name and reputation were wall-eyed affairs. *Roland The Headless Thompson Gunner*, *Mohammed's Radio*, *Poor Poor Pitiful Me*, *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* and especially *Werewolves of London* stand out. His songs were covered by the likes of the **Grateful Dead**, **David Lindley**, **Linda Ronstadt** and **Hank Williams Jr.** The guest musicians contributing to his albums included **Jackson Browne**, **Bob Dylan**, **Phil Everly**, **Emmylou Harris** and **Bruce Springsteen**. *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead* (1996) is the best port of call. Quoth Warren, "I'm too old to die young/And too young to die now" (*Bed of Coals*). Noir was rarely so amusing.

Slim Dusty: 1927 - 2003

The second major loss to country music in September 2003 was the death of **Slim Dusty** on the 19th. In his way, the Australian singer and songwriter was every inch as important as Johnny Cash. His equally rugged brand of country music was forged in the outback of New South Wales

where pills were for drongos and beer was the golden nectar of parched throats, not merely the drug of choice. Born **David Gordon Kirkpatrick** on 13 June 1927, he grew up on a dairy farm in Nulla Nulla Creek. The nearest settlement of any size was Kempsey, a coastal town that, according to the UK-based, Australian world music writer **Phil Wilson's** last visit still has a proper Australian diner with a menu of dishes from a time before fast food. Slim Dusty really lived the life to a jackaroo come stockman.

The wireless that beamed into Nulla Nulla Creek played a mixture of Empire-quality British fare, the home-grown, homespun tales of **Banjo Patterson** and even the occasional musky piece of Americana from **The Carter Family** or **Jimmie Rodgers**. This crucible created an indigenous country music and Slim Dusty would become Australia's foremost country singer. While still a teenager he did his first broadcast on Radio 2KM Kempsey. At 15 he cut the wartime patriotic tub-thumper *Song for the Aussies* and in 1946 he signed to EMI. His recording career notched up some hundred albums, but his biggest international hit came in 1956. A stockman braves the outback, only to have his worst nightmare come alive; *A Pub With No Beer* reached the Top 5 in Britain and Ireland and rarely has heartache been rendered with such tragicomic pain. It entered Australian folklore and Slim Dusty sang it at the closing ceremony for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

In 1979 the first of two autobiographies appeared. *Walk A Country Mile* was followed by a second autobiography *Another Day, Another Town* in 1997. In 1995 a permanent Slim Dusty exhibition was inaugurated at the Australian Country Music Foundation in Tamworth in his home state.

Will Atkinson: 1908 - 2003

The Northumbrian shepherd and multi-instrumentalist **Will Atkinson** died on 30 July aged 95. He was an inspiration to many on the British folk scene as a preserver of North-east English folkways. He inspired, the great **Alistair Anderson**, **Nancy Kerr** and **Kathryn Tickell**. Born 31 January 1908 in Crookham, Northumberland, Atkinson combined a rural livelihood that included shepherding and rabbiting with making music for local dances, pub bars and parlour. He played melodeon and button accordion, but harmonica gradually edged the others out to become his first instrument. As **Billy Atkinson**, he opened the Topic anthology, *Bonny North Tye – Northumbrian Country Music* as well as the monumental *Voice of the People* series for the same label.

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The Ontario Council of Folk Festivals' Sudbury Convention, October 17 - 19, 2003



Photos courtesy of the OCFF and taken by Andrew Strauss. Photo 1. The Lee Boys. 2. Friends of Fiddlers Green. 3. Evalyn Parry. 4. Socan Stories & Songs Session. 5. Doug McArthur and Richard Flohil. 6. Burnt. 7. Erin Benjamin. 8. Artsean Circle. — Penguin Eggs would like to thank Terry Wickham, Chris White, Mitch Podolak, Tom Metuzals, Grit Laskin and Tony Turner for their generous help and support during the conference.



Charbonniers de l'Enfer

Satan's little shovellers – dig them

Our Ken Hunt absolutely flipped when he heard Quebec's Charbonniers de l'Enfer in Germany last spring. "There was a directness, a vocal finesse and a manifest love for singing their lungs out and beating the living merde out of good wooden stages with bootwork that made me feel great to be a folkie," says he.

My fellow Canadians, you have musicians of the stature of Quebec's Charbonniers de l'Enfer ("The Coalminers From Hell") on your doorstep and you tell Penguin Eggs you've never heard of them, let alone listened to them and taken them to your bosom? Put their *Wô* (Whoa) on the deck. Start with track five, *Il n'y a qu'un seil Dieu*, have a glass of something strong – any Canadian equivalent of a Leffe blonde (Belgium's assisted passages to beery Heaven) will do – poured in advance, belt up and await cultural re-programming! When it comes to singing close harmonies and unison parts, there is something unholy about the vocal blend that the group mind is capable of. As acts like the McGarrigle Sisters, the Watsonsons or, no joke or slight intended, the Bee Gees reveal. Shared bloodlines create and convey something extraordinary that enable voices to slip between the interstices in the conventional building blocks of music. Listening to Les Charbonniers is like hearing brothers sing, not a brotherhood in some sense of holy order or betting fraternity, but something more like biological brothers. Honestly, there is no other act which I have ever dared say that about. Les Charbonniers are that uncanny. And, killer, they sing unaccompanied.

In the summer of 2003 Satan's Little Shovelling Folk toured Europe as part of a package of Canadian folk acts. At the Rudolstadt festival in Germany they gave two concerts and, frankly, they outshone every other act on the 'Canadian package tour'. There was a directness, a vocal finesse and a manifest

love for singing their lungs out and beating the living merde out of good wooden stages with bootwork that made me feel great to be a folkie. They were, as I reported in the last issue of Penguin Eggs, a musical epiphany. How was it for them? "Oh boy! We made a terrible mistake there," admits their André Marchand candidly. "Michel Bordeleau had played there with La Bottine years ago [1997] and didn't sell a lot of albums. We just brought 100 and we could have sold 1500. We're not very good at business! We won't make that error twice! That was the first time that we'd really played in front of people who couldn't understand a word we were saying in our music. We sing in French. You just don't know how people will receive you."

Ici could be a magazine from anywhere that calls itself 'here' but when Yves Bernard of the Montreal-based magazine described Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer as "le dream team de la polyphonie traditionnelle Québécoise" in 2003, he captured an essential vérité, as we British booze-cruisers say in Calais, that has nothing to do with vin's renowned verity-inducing abilities. The "dream team" label was not new. As early as 1996 Montreal's *Voir* magazine had described the combo the same way. First usages aside, there is no disputing that the five-piece was a dream team. It included a strong contingent from La Bottine Souriante, for example. Still, it is what a dream team delivers that elevates it, not the cluster of well-known names making up its number that turns celebrity of whatever calibre into dream deliverers.

The group's beginnings date back to the early 1990s. The band's proto-line-up came about, as the Charbonniers' André Marchand explains, when four of them worked on a recording project with Michel Faubert and his band Locomotive for Faubert's 1992 album, *Maudite Mémoire* (Confound Memory): "We all already knew each other because we'd been friends for 25 years and were 'running around'

the same occupations. Michel Faubert, one of the members of the band, had a career of his own. He was doing a show around his stuff in Quebec. He was accompanied by an electric band with backing vocals. Two of us would go sometimes. Or two others would go. It depended on schedules. When he recorded his album *Maudite Mémoire* he thought he'd use all the backing vocals at the same time and rehearse for the album. The electric band wasn't there at the first rehearsal that we had. It was only us around the table. We started to sing with no accompaniment and something happened there. It was extreme fun! Serious fun! It was kinda born there: the idea of getting together and singing a cappella."

Between *Maudite Mémoire* (Marchand translates it as *Damn Memory* but that loses the slight period flavour or quaintness of the French word *maudite*) and the Charbonnier debut proper, *Chansons a cappella* (Unaccompanied Songs), on the Quebec-based Mille-Pattes label, there was precious little time to perform together. Competing schedules kept them apart.

Nevertheless, as Marchand wheezes, "The idea stuck. We didn't play a lot for the first years. We recorded the first album in '96. It was difficult to find time to play. Michel Bordeleau was in La Bottine Souriante. Michel Faubert had a pretty serious career going on too. We just played twice or three times a year, but we had so much fun that we kept the idea going." The 'we' that coalesced comprised Bordeleau, Faubert, Yves Lambert and Marchand himself from the *Maudite Mémoire* sessions and Jean-Claude Mirandette, who, like Marchand, was concurrently working with Les Frères Labri. This quintet worked some during 1993 and 1994 before Lambert left and Normand Miron joined in his stead, in the process establishing the line-up that continues to this day.

This was the line-up that recorded *Chansons a cappella* during the spring of 1995, a fourteen-track snapshot of a group at a devilish crossroads. *Sur Ces Terres Labourées*, its opening track, for example, employs guimbarde (Jew's harp) accompaniment while the second, *Ce Sont Les Gens De Par Chez-Nous* uses podorythmie – rhythms pounded out by booted feet – to set the song's pace. Between them, so to speak, they see in the old and let free the new. Although the group had a number of accomplished instrumentalists in its ranks, instrumentation such as guimbarde, fiddle and frame drum would be ditched in favour of the wholesomeness of voices unaccompanied but for foot-stomping. *Dans Le Village De Paris*, the album's fourth track is a signpost to their future with its strong principal voice, meaty harmonies, podorythmie and tempi that turn on a dime, while *Le Gallant Noyé* is an indicator as to how they could handle unison vocals. Parenthetically, the collection even includes a song called *Le Charbonnier*. Many things can add zestful insights into the creative process – demos, out-takes, live recordings and suchlike – but if the clear-sighted vision of *Wô* turns you on, falling upon their earlier, more tentative, in

some ways more probing *Chansons a cappella* will reveal much when it comes to documenting how they shaped their art and found their voice.

However good a timepiece *Chansons a cappella* is, *Wô*, released in November 2002 on the Montreal-based La Tribu label, captures their spirit better still. "We organised some pillows and stuff around the feet," says Marchand, "so that it wouldn't carry too much into the other microphones. It was a completely live event. That was a challenge. Artistically speaking, since the first album we have come to a complete agreement that what we want to do is a cappella singing with feet. [An image to conjure with.] That's what we want to do and that's what we have fun doing."

If you want a trademark example of what makes them different, one facet of their singing illustrates that in a microcosm. Several songs in the repertoire are done *turlutée* as the Québécois expression puts it. *Turlutage* is a distinctive style of singing meaning—less vocabularies of the 'tidlédidom didédidlédidom didlédidé' kind. (It is also an exercise in synchronized breath control.) Les Charbonniers employ it judiciously, especially when shifting up a musical gear, as they do on, for example, *Lundi Mardi Jour De Mai* on *Wô*. And when they do, does it ever have an impact!

"Culturally speaking," Marchand confirms, "this was French culture originally. It is as different as French and English. The origin of this music is mostly the people from France who came here with it. It's got distorted and frozen, rearranged over the generations and with time. It's like [Quebec's] instrumental music: a lot of Irish settlers came to this region and you can hear that in our instrumental music. It's definitely of French origin but, you know, we've played in different places and we've been definitely well received. Culturally, it's very different to what's done elsewhere in Canada."

Let me venture an impudent prediction for a proxy Canadian, it occurs to me that Les Charbonniers are nothing less than the spearhead

of exciting movement in Canadian music that goes beyond Québécois affinities and divisions. Canadians, look to your past, experience your present as exemplified by Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer, Galant, tu perds ton temps and Madrigaïa, and the future will look after itself. *Wô* should be on the French syllabus.

Thanks to Odette Bélanger, Coordonnatrice de spectacles (job title or what!) at Productions Serge Paré for above and beyond assistance of pay increase proportions. Apologies for the snipe about Leffe blonde; Canada has nothing like Belgium's assisted passages to beery Heaven.



Once tampon a time

Evalyn Parry dresses in the strangest costumes. She makes grown men squirm. And think. And laugh. 'A young political Joni for the political queer,' writes Tom Metzals.

Walking onstage dressed in a pink plastic costume resembling a popular brand of tampon has rarely been considered a career move. For some. Not for singer-songwriter Evalyn Parry.

She surprised a lot of people with her eye-catching 'Maxi-Pad' showcase at a recent music industry conference in Sudbury.

"I start out dressed up in this big pink plastic thing, and I'm singing 'Let me introduce myself/ my name is Always/ I like to think I'm a girl's best friend...' and I can see the older men in the audience shifting uncomfortably in their seats, wondering what the hell is going on. But by the end of the song, it's those same guys who are peeing themselves laughing, along with the women in the crowd," says Parry.

That performance got attention. It made people realize her talents as a performer and, more importantly, as a songwriter.

Evalyn Parry lives in Toronto. Words are her thing. They tend to tumble out in a big rush, deliciously chewing up the syllables and synonyms to

deliver shock and laughter all in one sentence or lyric. Her songs weave the political with the ironic, the fun with sublime, but always with attitude and confidence, much like her performance.

Sitting in a local coffee shop, her distinctive, gold thin-rimmed glasses framing her shining eyes, you can't help but be drawn to her energy. And she is talking (what else?), thrilled to be working with words. Evalyn is a busy person, lurking at the fringes of theatre, writing plays, creating characters to inhabit, playing with words, writing melodies, riding her bike. She doesn't stop.

Unreasonable is her second release and has found an audience on both sides of the border, winning rave reviews. CBC Radio gushed, 'equally funny and disturbing, a songwriter who takes us into uncharted waters.' Xtra called her, 'a young political Joni for the political queer.'

The new disc marks a significant musical leap forward. Although there remains a balance of spoken word and music, with Ken Whiteley handling the production, a broader musical palette was introduced. Horns, pianos, orchestral, sparse or simply whimsical, *Unreasonable* is a gorgeous feast of words and music.

"I sometimes write even without the guitar. While I'm riding my bike, that's when I'll work through a melody or an idea."

Working with Ken and his musical ideas, things opened up. New jazzier arrangements and orchestral treatments were added.

"It was a treat to work with a band. Something I wasn't used to. That was exciting. I still listen to a lot of Veda Hille and singers like Emmylou Harris and Gillian Welch."

You can see where she is drawing a lot of her musical power. The record is impressive in its breadth, with many stand out tracks. *The Stone* and *The Bumblebee* won her the inaugural Colleen Peterson Songwriters Award, Laura Bird, with the Colleen Peterson Committee, called Parry's music, "Theatrical with such original writing, fabulous orchestration and I guess that's how songwriting should be approached - as all encompassing and Evalyn certainly embodies that notion. That's why we chose her."

A commission by CBC Radio's DNTO provided the birth of *Profit in the Margins*. Driven by a Shuffle Demon jazzy shuffle, she wanders into Meryn Cadell territory.

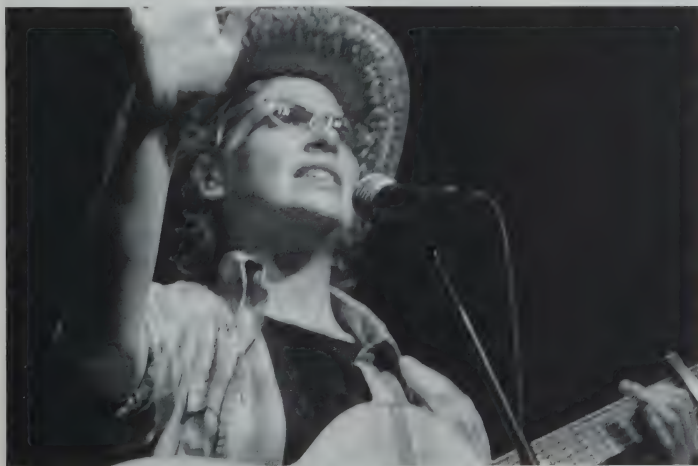
"When did gay become a goldmine?/ When did my previously marginal identity/ Become a marketable entity?" If not providing answers, at least she asks the questions that could provoke debate in the living room.

Every conversation about Evalyn Parry usually comes around to the Maxi-Pad song. *Always* deals with an issue that makes most men squirm, but has them thinking by the end. Tampons isn't something most men like to think about. The track nicely blends her theatrical and musical beings.

Social norms and perceptions is a theme that fre-

15
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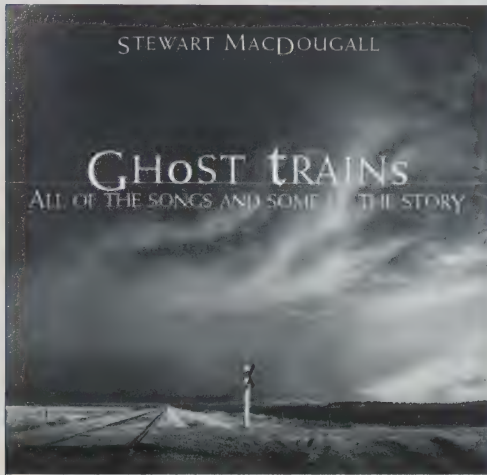
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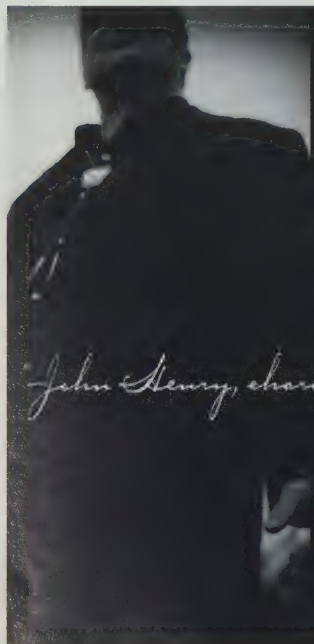
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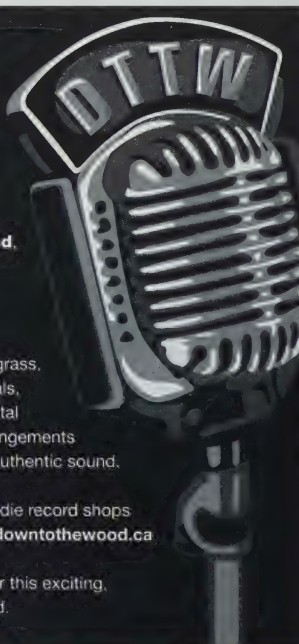
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quently comes up in her work. It's obviously something she wants to get her audience to think about.

"I write about stuff that I see, I want people to get involved and think about what is around us. I need to express what I am seeing. I mean I enjoy music for music's sake and I am not forgetting that I am putting on a performance, but language is a great thing. And engaging the mind is a fun thing. I've always been into the word play, learning to express something in an excessive way. But I want my work to engage people, I want to be engaged with the audience. Hopefully my lyrics get people to think, ask questions.

"I first wrote *Always* for an international women's day cabaret event in Toronto, and I pretty much knew it would go over—which it did. Since then, honestly, the piece has amazed me with the reaction it gets, even in the straightest, most unlikely places."

Like maybe at a music industry showcase.



Guitar Griot Great

Djelimady Tounkara, followed in the footsteps of Salif Keita and Mory Kanté when he joined Mali's legendary Super Rail Band. Now Tounkara is an inspiration to all African guitarists. David Ingram catches up with him in Salmon Arm.

Djelimady Tounkara. If you think his name sounds melodic, you should hear him play. Well-known in West Africa, just over thirty years of touring and recording with Mali's very successful group Super Rail Band have given him the highest of profiles. What's more, he has been a pioneer in arranging Malian traditional music for guitar, nowadays a common instrument in African bands, but hardly a traditional indigenous instrument.

"Non. Mon pere etait balafonist" recounts Djelimady in French, "My father played balafon, and I had the n'goni. He taught me balafon and the griot drum. But there was a man came to play in our village, and he had an acoustic guitar. Immediately I abandoned the balafon and the n'goni, and gave myself to the guitar."

Djelimady was born, in 1947, into a family of the griot class, who have the role of poets, oral historians, and traditional music makers in Mali. In fact the commonly used term "griot" is a French word, and the Malian original is 'djeli'. Again, you don't have to look much further than your man's first name to have his status confirmed. The songs he heard and learned at his home near Kita were traditional Malian, but the purchase of a radio brought in the influences of the outside world, and the young Djelimady was hooked on the contemporary sounds. "I also really liked modern music. Listening to Radio France and Voice of America, you could hear flamenco and jazz. At that time," he says with a smile, "there was also Chuck Berry."

Djelimady's interest in rock and roll and jazz can easily be heard in the fluid lines, arpeggios, double stops and octaves he employs so expertly, and in the inventive rhythm changes that occur in so many pieces. Some of that jazz which he was listening to was in fact from Cuba, very popular in

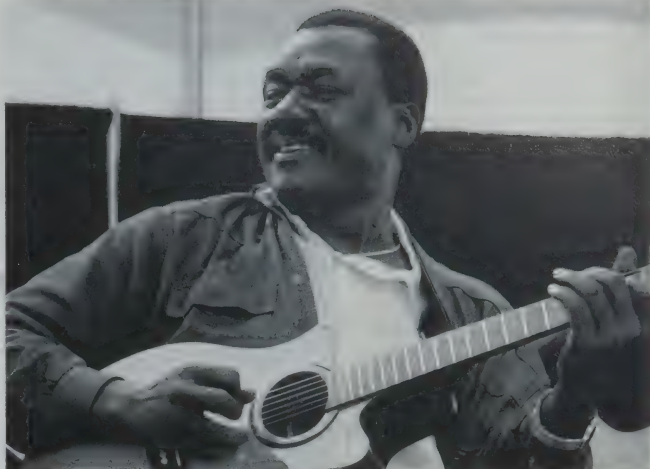


Photo By: David Ingram

Djelimady Tounkara

Africa during the fifties, and the lasting influence of those rhythms can still be heard in much Malian popular music today. But Djelimady claims this is hardly surprising, and sees it as a kind of bouncing back of the effect that African beats had on the Americans after slaves, largely from West Africa, had brought their music over with them. He says it's one of the reasons Malian music is so popular in Africa and Europe. "Jazz originally comes from Mali, it's the source. There is Manding music, very strong in melody and harmony, and there is Wassoulou music, also very harmonious, which is widely played today, melodies which please everyone. There is even melody in Bambara, which is our national language. Really it's a different music which everyone can enjoy."

Despite his father's initial opposition, Djelimady pursued his guitar playing. By 1972 he was playing with the Super Rail Band, who had an ongoing gig at the train station hotel in the capital city, Bamako. The guitarist's stock rose, as it became apparent that he was an exceptional talent. Super Rail Band was an early home to Salif Keita and Mory Kanté, and after they moved on, Djelimady became the group's musical leader.

This past summer, Tounkara toured Europe with Super Rail Band, and North America with his own acoustic band, made up of Samba Diabate on second guitar, Bamba Dembele on djembe, with vocals by Samba Sissoko and Djelimady's third daughter Mariam.

"I was first in Canada in 1990, and the Canadian public liked my music. Thanks to Banning Eyre (author of a fascinating book, *In Griot Time*, recounting his experiences in Mali as a student of Tounkara) I am well known in the territory. The people are very nice."

Having translated the phrasing and feel of older n'goni and balafon classics onto the six string, and blended that approach with modern influences he has absorbed, Djelimady, a tall man anyway, towers over West African guitar as one of its greatest innovators and practitioners. When he and his

acoustic quintet played the Salmon Arm Roots and Blues Festival this past summer, there were also several other crowd-pleasing African bands. One of these was the sensational young Senegalese group Pape and Cheikh. The quartet have a sparkling guitarist in Oumar Sow, who admitted he was delighted to play a festival with Djelimady, and confirms he has been an inspiration to guitarists all over Africa. "Absolutely, yes. I have listened to him. I know the music of Mali. We also have Bambara like they do. I have great respect for Djelimady Tounkara. For a long time he has been very well known because of the Rail Band. I must pay him homage; he is a master."

When Djelimady learns of Oumar Sow's words he is gracious in a revealing reaction. "He plays well. I saw him in Edmonton with his group. He has progressed. He also mixes jazz, Manding, Senegalese, and it's very good. All the young players respect me. They have learned lessons from me, Salif, and Mory Kante. Ousmane Kouyate, the guitarist with Salif, and the guitarist from Youssou N'Dour, they are the players who are also on top."

As well as playing his own music, Tounkara is in demand as a studio guitarist, recently contributing some marvellous touches on Malian singer Kandia Kouyate's superb new album *Biriko*, work he enjoys very much. "Yes, with Kandia yes. It was Ousmane Kouyate who did the arrangements on Kandia's album, who phoned me and asked 'Maitre Djelimady can you come and play with us?' They brought me to France for the recording. Kandia is magnificent, very, very good."

Djelimady plans to continue with both the acoustic quintet and with Super Rail Band, so there's lots more music to come from this tremendous musician. In the meantime, picking up his beautiful album *Sigui*, done with the acoustic band, or Super Rail Bands new release, *Kongo Sigui*, would be good steps in tuning in to this guitar great.



Of Saints and Singers

The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir share a fondness for the Devil's music. While ragged and raw, they possess more spirit than a Highland distillery. Roddy Campbell hears their confessions

Hot, dusty, Saturday afternoon at the Calgary folk festival and I'm deeply contemplating one of life's more pressing concerns: a curry or a pint? A sun-burnt grin interrupts my reverie. "Give this a listen," insists Bob Keelaghan. And a CD is pressed into my palm.

A couple of weeks roll by before The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir's *Saint Hebert* receives a spin. But it's immediately apparent that there's a raw, emotional intensity at play here that no amount of bluff can possibly duplicate.

"Saint Hubert was a man," growls Judd Palmer. "Saint Hubert was a man before he was a saint." Surely he gargles with carpet tacks. I mean this voice makes Captain Beefheart and Howlin' Wolf sound like angelic upstarts. Such comparisons clearly amuse Palmer's colleagues.

"He is a big Tom Waits fan," chuckles Keelaghan. "I also think that Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart are a couple of guys who took traditional blues and sort of warped it around and made it their own. Look at Captain Beefheart and his vocal style, he took a lot of that from Howlin' Wolf. Judd's also a huge Howlin' Wolf fan. So I think they are fairly linked. Judd is looking in the same direction as Captain Beefheart but also with a mind to warp them in the same way he did."

The Choir's songs are ragged, sometimes littered with technical deficiencies, and yet they incorporate more spirit than a Highland distillery. Recorded in three days live off the floor of a mountain chalet in Cannmore, Alberta, *Saint Hebert* is an undeniable statement of intent.

"When I think about records now, I wonder if I'm getting a performance or am I getting a virtual performance because of multi-tracking," says Keelaghan. "We wanted to get as much of a live sound as possible. I listen to old blues records, old western swing, or jazz from the 30s, 40s and 50s. You are listening to a band playing. It just seems more honest."

"Take The Chieftains, where you have six to eight guys playing together, if they can pull off a recording sounding that powerful, why can't four guys. It seems like an excuse if you have to over-dub all the time just to get it right. It's more a test of musicianship, I think."

The Calgary-based Choir: Keelaghan (acoustic guitar), Palmer (banjo and guitar), Vladimir Sobolewski (stand-up bass), and Jason Woolley (percussion) — joke about their music as skiffle. Jugband blues somehow seem more of an appropriate reference point. Whatever, Palmer, it appears, writes most of their originals, including the gripping title track, a testimonial to the patron saint of hunters.



The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir

"Judd has a fascination with religious figures. I think currently it's with Rasputin," says Keelaghan. "I'm going to guess and put words in his mouth, but what I know about Saint Hubert is that he is a classic saint — rich boy, born of privilege, has a big vision. Once he has his spiritual experience he swears off his wealth and goes to live in poverty. And the song itself is about that."

"Judd is also a children's book author," says Vladimir Sobolewski, "so he has a really crazy imagination. And he really dwells on the past — real cool stories and myths. So when he writes music he pulls from that stuff. Saint Hubert is the patron saint of hunters. It's his story, basically in the song."

The Agnostic Gospel Mountain Choir grew out of Great Uncle Bull — an ad-hoc bluegrass band formed to provide the score for the play, *Cabin Fever*. While not officially a band, they received several offers of gigs and duly accepted. Almost two years later, their ranks would include the fine

Calgary singer Julie Kerr and banjo maestro Craig Korth. Despite recording one disc, *Hello City Limits*, Sobolewski and Palmer wanted to play "darker music" with "punk attitude." They got their wish in January, 2001.

"It was basically a frantic call from Judd saying he got a gig opening for Lester Quitau," says Sobolewski. "So we got a drummer, called up Bob, and we threw together as many songs as we could in a week and then did our first show. And it went off well."

Fair enough, but why The Agnostic Mountain Gospel Choir? "The best it was explained to me," says Keelaghan, "Judd came off this long hike in the mountains with this exhilarating feeling thinking: 'I've got to play gospel music but it can't be religious. It's got to be agnostic. It would be great if there was a choir.' He thought of the name before there was a band."

Keelaghan, brother of folk singer James, was brought into the Choir because of his interest in early blues. As a teenager, he tended to gravitate towards the likes of Led Zeppelin. Redemption came from early Spirit of the West and Dick Gaughan recordings borrowed from his big brother.

"It was one of the first times I heard roots music being played with fire," says Bob. "But things that tend to excite me more nowadays is the roots of the music that I grew up on. Generally, when you're a younger person you listen to the clichés. And when I went back and listened to Skip James, Bukka White and the Reverend Gary Davis, people like that, those weren't clichés. What they were doing for the time was really unusual."

"They were extremely powerful players, singers, musicians and writers. I think for me, coming back to playing acoustically, being able to harness that kind of power that those guys did just with the acoustic instruments and voices seemed way more of a challenge than hiding behind the volume of an amplifier. Playing acoustic instruments and stomping along and singing, coming up with that same sort of energy seemed a way more satisfying. Audiences seemed to take to it a way better as well."

Uncles At Large

The Great Uncles of the Revolution comprise a beast of a very strange hue. They'll tackle anything from Sergei Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf to Benny Goodman's Stompin' at the Savoy. "I don't think Bach wrote any quartet music for ukelele," founder Andrew Downing tells Bruce Deachman.

The sounds that have been created over the past three years by Canadian quartet Great Uncles of the Revolution are the kind that utterly confound musical nomenclaturists. Their music has alternately been compared to folk, roots, bluegrass, jazz, klezmer, classical and chamber music, and locating either of their two albums — 2001's *Great Uncles of the Revolution Stand Up!* and the recently-released *Blow the House Down* — in record stores is an exercise akin to finding a needle in umpteen different haystacks.

But if, as 17th-century Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza stated, nature abhors a vacuum, then the Great Uncles' unique style is a welcome and necessary addition to the world's jukebox.

"I'm not sure that I would cling to any one of those (descriptions)," says the group's 30-year-old founder Andrew Downing. "The one that makes me feel the best, though, is when someone compares us to chamber music."

"One of the things that live chamber music is based on is the sound of a small number of instruments when they're really sounding like themselves. Like in a string quartet, you can really hear the beauty of the instruments, and that's one thing that's a big focus for me with the Great Uncles: to hear these beautiful instruments, and the subtleties and tiny nuances you can get from just a piece of wood or metal."

But as chamber music ensembles go, the Great Uncles comprise a beast of a very strange hue. Downing complements his double bass with the occasional pump organ, Kevin Turcotte adds trumpet, while Jesse Zubot and Steve Dawson throw in such disparate instruments as Hawaiian slide guitar, National steel, violin, mandolin and ukelele.

"I don't think Bach wrote any quartet music for ukelele," jokes Downing.

No, he didn't, but then again, when you throw together a couple of Toronto-based jazz musicians with a west-coast roots duo, the results are bound to be unpredictable. Released in September, their *Blow the House Down* is a sharp example of that. Wedged in amongst their eight original instrumentals is a 24-minute suite of pieces from Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. While instantly recognizable, the Great Uncles version adds a greater playfulness than is found in most recordings of the Russian composer's 1936 classic.

"I just heard a little snippet of *Peter and the Wolf* one day," recalls Downing, "either on TV or the radio, and I thought, 'Hmm...there are some nice melodies there and interesting music. It'd be cool to do one or two of the themes with the Great Uncles!'"

But the more he listened to it, the more Downing realized that the children's symphony made a good arrangement for his group, and he ultimately arranged 10 of its themes, including the popular *Peter and Triumphant Procession*.

"We took out some of the action sequences, focussing instead on the character themes."

"Audiences have really dug it, and a lot of people remember it from when they were a kid. That wasn't the reason for doing it, but it's nice sometimes when there's a bit of familiarity in a concert and people can check out stuff that they know, either from a different time or in a different version."

The Great Uncles formed in 2000, a year or two after Zubot and Dawson had hired Downing to play bass for them at a Barrie, Ont. showcase. In 1999, Downing returned the favour, hiring the Vancouver pair to tour with him in Attention Span, a jazz group Downing formed. The band's name—Great Uncles of the Revolution—came the way that Downing's song titles come: after the fact.

"I just kind of put some words together that felt like what the group was going to be like."

Their first release, Downing admits, only came as the result of Dawson being the owner of Black Hen Music, and the group wanting something to sell at their live shows. Their second album, however, indicates a band that's sticking it out.

As soon as we started rehearsing, I knew the group was probably going to stay together for a long time. Everyone in the band seems to have a good time. It's definitely different from anything else they do."

In fact, it's different from just about anything anyone does. Yet despite this—or perhaps because of it—the Great Uncles are hauling in accolades left and right. The group won a 2002 West Coast Music Award for best instrumental, non-classical release, the same year that Dawson's *Bug Parade* earned him two WCMA's—for best folk and roots/traditional albums. The Uncles also claimed the Montreal Jazz Festival's prestigious Grand Prix de Jazz award last year.

"Those things are important to the career of a band, but I'm not sure how much they're an indication of the quality of music that's going around."

In the Great Uncles case, the praise is deserved. Their compositions, on both albums, are intelligent, challenging and fun. They take risks, yet at the same time manage to stay within the confines of what is comfortable listening. So while their versions of *Peter and the Wolf* and Benny Goodman's *Stompin' at the Savoy*, the latter from their *Stand Up!* CD, are like nothing you've heard before, they're also what you'll want to hear more of.

"The thing I appreciate the most, is when people who I wouldn't expect to like it come and say, 'Oh, I really enjoyed that.'"

Downing adds that the Great Uncles are going to ride their new release for a while before recording a third. The next, though, will be a little thicker, bigger, with the additions of viola, horns and clarinet. "The music I'm writing these days is for more than four people, maybe eight to ten."

"There will probably be some Great Aunts in there, too."



Between The Covers

He has designed well over 300 CD covers, most of them for Canadian roots music artists. He's been a stand-up comedian and the marketing director of a San Francisco live sex emporium. He is Michael Wrycraft, one of Canadian music's most surprising characters. Richard Flohil gets the skinny.

Michael Wrycraft spends at least 12 hours a day in front of his trusty Mac computer and signs his e-mails with a cheerful declaration of independence: "I Love My Job." His apartment, studio, and CD-littered home is lit mostly by the light from the screen, as the music blares out of his first-rate sound system.

As professional as he is when it comes to work, he can drive himself and his clients crazy, often meeting and matching deadlines only by the skin of his teeth.

Despite the pressures - and he'll admit that many of them are self-imposed - he finds every day a joyful experience. "Who else gets paid for spending all day like an eight-year-old in art class, coming up with creative ideas and executing them?" he asks, adding: "And all the time I'm listening to music that no-one else will hear for three or four months. This is a dream career. Of course I love my job!"

He is larger than life - at well over 6 ft. 3 inches tall and close to 350 lbs. (Even though I lost 40 lbs," he insists). Professionally, he calls himself 'A Man Called Wrycraft' - a name he chose after seeing a New Yorker cartoon ("the first one I had ever laughed at") of two women having tea on a penthouse balcony. Said one of them, about her husband. "From now on, Ronald wants to be known as A Man Called Ronald."



The Great Uncles of the Revolution

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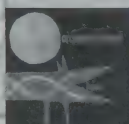
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A Man Called Wrycraft

A Man Called Wrycraft was the name he used for his comedy career, which used bits of music. In short order he was headlining at Yuk Yuks in Toronto. In June 1983, he left for Hollywood; like so many Canadians, he went to look for his big break into the comedy world; it never came. Instead, he found himself working for three years as a paste-up artist and production designer in an ad agency, and then moving to San Francisco to work as marketing director of the Lusty Lady Theatre, and fondly recalls the giant San Francisco earthquake, the 12 cataclysmic seconds of which he spent in a basement room with three stark naked women.

"Folk would come in, lock themselves in a booth, put a quarter in a slot, and watch women take their clothes off. When I started they were taking in 23,000 quarters a week; with my marketing ideas in place, they were up to 38,000 quarters a week by the time I left," he recalls. "I think they still use the logo I created for them, of a happy face with swirling eyes and the line 'Have an erotic day'."

Nine years later, he came back. The University of Toronto School of Architecture had an experimental Apple-sponsored design programme, and Wrycraft figured that this was the future - but the three-month course cost \$5,000 and he was broke. He convinced the school, however, to let him take the course for free, in exchange for working as a teaching aide. "While I was doing that, and because I couldn't afford a computer of my own, I would stay all night as a monitor in the computer lab - and that's where I designed my first record cover."

It was for a Don Ross album for the now defunct Duke Street label. Violinist Oliver Schroer played on that album, and gave Wrycraft the assignment to design his *Jigz Up* album, and the Duke Street connection led him to work for their hot newcomer, Jane Siberry. They no longer speak, but he designed everything from logos to letterhead and from website to merchandise, for her Sheeba label.

Since that first Don Ross cover design, Wrycraft and his trusty Mac have completed more than 320 covers for artists as varied as Bruce Cockburn and John Cage, rocker David Wilcox and The

Rheostatics. He gives a special price to independent artists - somewhere in the vicinity of \$1800, which will usually hit \$2,000 with expenses and taxes. Be assured, however, that established artists on major labels pay more - but, like the independents he loves to work for, he also delivers art direction for postcards, posters, T-shirts and other merchandise items.

Along the way he's been nominated for Juno Awards (and won one for the design for Andy Stochansky's *Radio Fusebox* album).

"It's the music that matters," he says. "What I do is try to present an artist's music to the world with subtlety and beauty, and suggest to people that they HAVE to hear the music on the CD." His working method includes "listening to the music, and putting it through the filter of my mind. Somehow, something visual emerges from that process." Right now, having recently completed the design for the tribute collection of Gordon Lightfoot, he's working on the sleeve for the next Lightfoot album, *Harmony*, due next year. "He's amazing; he's still writing wonderful songs," Wrycraft marvels.

In recent months, he's revisiting a role he asayed many years back, when he "executive produced" a winter compilation of songs by a number of independent artists, called *Stuck on a Cold Steel Pole*. Working for Fred Litwin's NorthernBlues label, he supervised a unique collaboration between guitarists Harry Manx and Kevin Breit; a new duo album, with Breit and Toronto blues singer John Dickie, is on the way, and there is a planned recording session with Breit and Nashville dobro master Jerry Douglas.

"One more thing," he says, "you have to mention my friend David Travers-Smith, who is a fabulous producer and mixer and who's my partner in crime in these projects."

He pauses.

"Oh, yes, I really DO love my job!"



Heartbeats Accelerating

"I've always been a bit of a brooder, so a lot of my songs are based in anger," Arlene Bishop tells Chuck Molgat. Her latest disc is called *Cut A Man's Heart Out*. Nurse, pass the Kalashnikov.

If the reception afforded Arlene Bishop's recent Ontario Council of Folk Festivals showcase was any indication, the Toronto-based singer-songwriter is due for a busy, busy summer ahead.

"That was a very successful show for me," says Bishop, on the phone from her home in Hogtown's Danforth district. "I played to a room full of people and walked away with a lot of offers and great comments and new relationships."

By her estimation, Bishop says what transpired onstage at the OCF's annual gathering of artists and Canadian folk-fest brass (held last October in Sudbury) was just as important as what didn't happen during her set.

"It was the first showcase I've had where I didn't choke. Usually I choke and I freak out a little, second-guess the set list, that sort of thing."

That kind of frank admission is typical of the self-effacing approach Bishop takes to her often critically-acclaimed work. Also typical of Bishop's style is her insistence on attributing credit where it's due. A case in point: the aforementioned showcase and the solid performance put in by the team of veteran musicians who comprise her backing band.

"I think Craig Northey had a lot to do with (the showcase's success), too," says Bishop, citing the former Odds frontman, producer and much sought-after session player. Northey also contributed guitar and backing vocals to Bishop's latest disc, *Cut A Man's Heart Out*, released in February, 2003.

"He came out from Vancouver for a couple of days, so we were able to rehearse prior to the show and get everything down."

Also on the receiving end of Bishop's props is multi-instrumentalist producer Blair Packham, whom she considers an integral part of her overall creative process. Packham (who just happens to be Bishop's husband) co-produced *Cut A Man's Heart Out* along with studio co-conspirator Jeremy Darby. He also oversaw the making of Bishop's two previous releases, her 1996 debut EP *Pinky* and her 2000 full-length CD *Snarky Girlpop*.

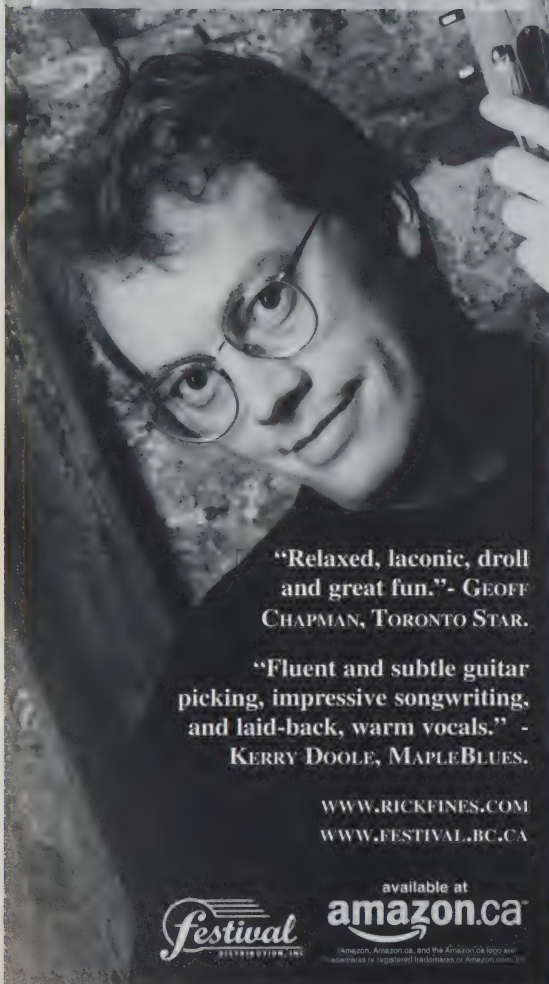
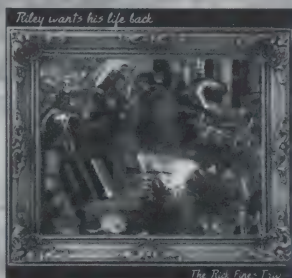
"I never would have made my first record without him," says Bishop, who relocated to Toronto from Ottawa in the mid-1980s. She and the former Jitters guitarist-vocalist have been married for nearly five years now, yet together for the past 14. "I was very content to just play live. But Blair had a couple of records out and some studio experience and he felt very strongly that I should have a record. It was happening at a time in the scene when everybody was releasing records, so it seemed like I had better get one out before my mother got one out."

"He's the one who causes me the most happiness and heartbreak. So a lot of my emotions are rooted in my relationship with Blair. Plus, he's my band-leader and he's my very, very best friend."

Some of the other elements of Bishop's backing band include drummer Mark Mariah and bass players Paul Brennan and Maury Lafoy, depending on which of the popular four-stringers is available at any given time. Over a dozen talented artists contributed to Bishop's latest disc, too, including Toronto music scene stalwarts Kurt Swinghammer,

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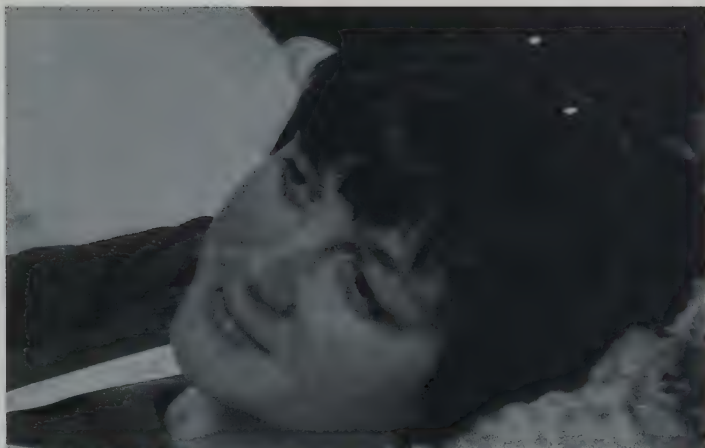


Photo By: A Man Called Wycraft

Arlene Bishop

Tamara Williamson and Mia Sheard.

While a handful of the same names have graced the liner notes of each of Bishop's releases, her latest disc represents a significant departure. Whereas her previous two recordings were more or less pieced together as conventional band efforts, *Cut A Man's Heart Out* was assembled in layers with Bishop at the core of each song.

"We wanted this recording to be centered a lot more around me, so we started with me acoustically and built up from there. In the past, I had written songs, had the band learn them and then record. This way, I was a lot more selfish."

Bishop attributes the radical change in studio dynamics, at least in part, to the fact she was expecting a child throughout the recording process.

"I was pregnant at the time and was very self-centred."

One thing that didn't change in the studio this time around, though, was Bishop's penchant for delivering the stylistically diverse goods with a healthy dose of dark humour.

"I've always been a bit of a brooder, so a lot of my songs are based in anger. I'm a little obsessive about things, too, so it's healthy for me to get that out in song."

As far as accounting for the humour component of her craft, Bishop says it's likely an extension of her long-held passion for creative embellishment and a natural desire to entertain.

"I love to have people's attention and normal, everyday life comes across a lot better when you can embellish it. I'm a liar by nature, and as a songwriter and a performer, I'm very comfortable lying."

Bishop is no slouch when it comes to being brutally honest, either. Take, for example, the fact she readily admits to having bought into the notion put forth by critics who tagged her one of Canada's most woefully overlooked and under-appreciated musical talents.

"It's true, I've felt that way in the past, but those are just sour grapes, really. Lots of people are overlooked. In fact, most people are overlooked, so I'd say I'm in very good company there. And a lot of

people who have been noticed and picked up by labels, when you look at their careers a couple years later, it's been more of a hindrance than a help and they can't really develop the way they'd like to.

"So I think in a lot of ways I'm lucky as a songwriter because I can write about anything I want at all, and I can make any kind of record I want and I don't have to worry about it selling a lot of copies. I really just have to worry about making back my investment, if I want to worry about it at all. I just have to worry about making a record that I like."



The Dust Bowl Brother

With a heightened sense of morality and a skewed sense of justice, Mark Browning remains the only permanent member of Canadian alt-country darlings, Ox. "I contemplate thoroughly before stealing someone's bicycle," he tells Fish Griwkowsky.

Somewhere out there, depending on when you read this, there's a little Nissan sedan driving too many musicians around on the wrong side of the road. This car might be on its way out of Glasgow, or maybe somewhere in Uganda, for all we know. But it's moving fast. Now if this car were to have a little flag attached to the antenna, a pirate's Jolly Roger would be the perfect fit, and for several reasons. The first is visual, because this car in motion contains a band from Vancouver called Ox. Rotate the word Ox 90 degrees clockwise—shazam—it's a skull and crossbones. Yar, mates! But I would hardly drag you through such a mental exercise without a deeper connection to chew on, now would I? No.

You see, like a pirate, Ox's lead singer and only permanent member has some rather curious ideas about stealing, which he tells me about on his way to Inverness, Scotland, having endured more than enough time in the Nissan with his posse. His name is Mark Browning and thanks to his grubby heart-sleeve lyrics you kind of wonder, was he a slight badass as a child? "No, not a bad kid, really," he shrugs. "Just with a just a heightened sense of morality and a skewed sense of jus-

tice. I don't think stealing is wrong unless it's wrong—as in, stealing a poor struggling musician's guitar is wrong, stealing an old lady's purse is wrong, stealing someone's clothes from the laundromat is wrong. Stealing from Esso is OK. Stealing from Wal-Mart is OK. And stealing from insurance companies is definitely OK. Obviously, every situation requires a separate analysis, so I contemplate thoroughly before stealing someone's bicycle."

There are two references to the stealing act in the song titles of Ox's laid-back, well-written new album, *Dust Bowl Revival* (which can only be square-pegged as alt-country if you also awkwardly lump Neil Young into the category). The first song of thievery is *Stolen Bike*, the sequel to a brilliant, Nazareth-summoning song earlier on the album called *Stolen Car*. And with the air of some authority, here's what Browning has to say about the hot-wiring. "Cars are a symbol of freedom. A stolen car is even more liberating because it makes you 'on the run.' And you didn't have to pay for it... so no job to worry about. Besides, it's the coolest theft because it has a built-in getaway."

But Browning is perhaps forgetting a cooler theft in his recent past. When *Dust Bowl Revival* debuted on college radio this summer, it blew Radiohead's minor comeback *Hail to the Thief* out of the water. "I'm not a big Radiohead fan," says Browning, who also just goes by Ox for effect. "Not a fan at all, really. I think they're good and everything, I just don't like listening to them. Kind of like Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother*. Neat, but who ever gets in that kind of mood? I think Ox knocked 'em out because people got into it... the *Rocky* thing, the little guy scenario. Folks liked the idea of a little indie band breaking through to No. 1—Canadian, no label, no money, no manager, no radio tracker—everything home-done. First time it's ever happened. I'm proud of that. I'd be happy about it even if it wasn't my record that did it."

Long ago, of course, it was college upstart Radiohead stealing away possible profits from bands like U2, but that's an essay for another magazine. It is because Ox is so untouchably down to Earth you're reading about them right now. Also, in a fight, I'd pick Mark.

Ox began humbly on the Canadian West coast, coming to Browning in a dream. "Nobody liked (the name) at first, which was a real plus," Browning says, charmingly anti-social. But the statement works on the same level his album does. There's no major reason it should be so charming, besides its honesty. It's a simple, uncouth exploration of one guy's very Canadian tastes, including driving around with no purpose in mind. Including listening to *Love Hurts* in 1979. Including stealing. Prodded on that, he proudly lists: "Here are the things I love: mullets, Camaros, Thin Lizzy, hockey and the Calgary Flames, laundromats, bus depots, pot with Journey/REO Speedwagon, my trucker cap, the Pope and his car, chicks, Mike Ricci's teeth, Lanny MacDonald, rock T-shirts with white sleeves, beer, white bread (toasted), video games, movies where stuff gets blown up, movies about outer space, movies where people get high, shotgunning beer and pot."

Are you starting to get the picture? Despite the pretty songs, Browning either is or wants to be what we call a

"dirt" down at the bar, a man with no aspirations or illusions of high culture.

He soon talks about his road-mates, the ones stuffed into the car. They weren't even there when the band formed. "I'd like to say we were all buddies—a gang, the old fashioned way. Truth is, it all started as just me. Ox is a weird one—it's a bit of a revolving door of people joining in and sitting out according to circumstance and, increasingly, my own ambitious schedule. I hate to sit and wait and so, often, I just book the tour and wing it. The last band I was 'in' was years ago—I left it after hearing Bob Dylan's *Good As I Been to You* and decided to go back to the solo acoustic thing. Ox isn't a band, it's a collective."

Currently, two boys and a girl (with a fake name) in a Nissan, that collective includes Ruby Loves You on piano and vocals, Joel Curran on bass. Browning, who before B.C. grew up with "vinyl and Lego everywhere in my room" in Sudbury, Ont., sings and plays guitar. Just to buck the "alt country" label one last time, here's Ox himself: "Nobody in my family likes country and honestly, I'm not really country, either. I think when you're indie you end up being lo-fi. That means stuff that isn't

hard to move around and isn't hard to make sound good, like old guitars and tape machines, used gear, etc. You go acoustic and make do with the electric stuff you can find. It ends up resembling 'country' but it ain't, necessarily. It's just semi-redneck, a lack of showers and salads, too much beer and mileage, small-town America and Canada, trucker caps and french fries. It ain't gonna be hip-hop, it ain't gonna be rap. Really, we're living country so it sounds that way."

OK. But did you at least steal the Nissan?



Sister Saskatchewan

For 20-odd years Connie Kaldor has turned the raw matter of everyday life - basic themes like making a living and raising a family - into gripping songs. "I can't believe I'm still doing this. I can't believe I'm this old and still this immature," she tells Roger Levesque

Taking in most contemporary Canadian folk festivals could leave you with the impression that the plight of independent singer-songwriters here is relatively healthy. It wasn't always that way, especially for women.

That makes Connie Kaldor's story all the more remarkable. When she created her own record label and started setting up her own tours in the early 1980s there wasn't a significant distribution network for independent music, and folk has never had much attention from major music labels. But there's more.

As a respected artist, veteran songwriter and a novel interpreter of prairie existence, Kaldor has found a gift for turning the raw matter of everyday life - basic themes like making a living and raising a family - into gripping stories. Her songs take on the toils and triumphs of the every-woman and man.

"To me that's totally fascinating," offers the Juno



Mr Ox - Mark Browning

Award winner. "What we consider an average life is way more interesting than Donald Trump. If you start talking to people you can get the most amazing stories. Real drama. I like descriptive language but I've always been drawn to simplicity because it is extraordinary how much alike we are to everyone else."

"I've got a song called *Coyote's Call* I sing almost every night (from *Small Cafe*). It's about a waitress who works long shifts in a restaurant every day to raise three kids. To me that's incredibly courageous. She's climbing Mount Everest everyday, in an ordinary life. But it's extraordinary."

That vision has gripped Kaldor's songs over 11 albums now if you include the recent anthology *Vinyl Songbook 1980-89*, her two discs for children, and a Christmas record she did with pal Roy Forbes back in the mid-80s - all of it released independently with some help from Vancouver's Festival Distribution.

"I've kind of kept under the radar of the music industry. They still really don't know what to do with me. I think I've been an enigma most of my career but I still seem to have survived."

Survived! Hah! A master of understatement. This woman's about to launch a national weekly all-Canadian folk and roots music series on Vision TV, *Kaldor* at Wood River Hall.

"I've been trying to get somebody to do a television show on folk music for years and I'm thrilled somebody is doing it here. It's way overdue. It's one of the most exciting scenes that Canada has - such a catch-bag of musical styles - and they're all really interesting."

"Wood River Hall is in a mythical place. We did it in a production studio in Regina but we tried to make it look like a little hall some place for that homey feel."

"It's wonderful. One thing that struck me is just how damn good these musicians are, and the music is great. The audience is really with them and they get to do two or three songs. There's no interview. It's just a performance show. But everybody was so different. We had Bruce Cockburn over to Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, to The Duhks,

Scarlett, Washington & Whiteley and Stringband, from one spectrum to another. They're all Canadian and it struck me again just how rich that scene is."

Apart from criss-crossing the continent on tour for over 20 years, Kaldor's pursuits found her living in several Canadian cities before she settled in Montreal in 1990. But a recent conversation found her back in the province of Saskatchewan, close to her home town of Regina, which seemed reason enough to bring up the continuing crested echoes of her prairie origins.

"There were a whole bunch of songs that needed to be written about this place, and I was in a great position as a writer because there were all these stories that hadn't been told from a woman's point of view. The prairies wasn't just the middle of nowhere."

Kaldor grew up in a musical environment starting with the fact that her father was choir director at the Lutheran church. She heard polka, country music, church music and show tunes thanks to her parents, but had to borrow the Supremes from the local library and buy her own Beatles records.

"We all sang. We sang grace everyday. In fact my mother said that I sang in the cradle, and I never understood that until my youngest son started singing little melodies to himself in his crib. I was always a bit unconventional, but I had some good role models, Joni Mitchell and people like that."

Music wasn't her first choice as a career. After high school she moved to Edmonton to attend the theatre program at the University of Alberta. Following her graduation in 1976 she wound up working with the Mummies in Newfoundland, and Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto. Musicals originally drew her to theatre and it helped that she was "a bit of a ham".

"I got a couple of things from my theatre training starting with respect for the stage. When you stand up in front of people it's a gift that they've come to see you. The other part is the sense of story coming through. That's one reason I chose folk music, that and the fact that rock music back then was just a wasteland for women. Another thing I got out of independent theatre was the do-it-yourself ethic, to

just put on your own show."

She still felt that "music was more powerful and more important", and it coincided with moving back west, persuading a friend to be her manager, and trying to get into the festivals. Kaldor had a different demeanour. She wore cowboy boots and a leather skirt, not the hippie look then common to folksingers. Her songs were unusual too, starting with the hilarious number *Jerks*, from her debut album *One Of These Days*.

By 1983 she was starting to develop her touring thanks in part to Stan Rogers who got her opening his dates. He also helped her sign with Fleming and Associates that year, before perishing in an infamous plane accident.

"It was a real shock, on many levels. I was there at the same festival at Kerrville in Texas in 1983 when he did his last gig. I just flew back a different way. It was a benchmark in a way because it made me realize I wouldn't be around forever and made me get my act together. He was very good to me and really bent over backwards to introduce me to people."

Before the decade was out Kaldor performed as far away as China and India but there were big challenges. She recalls making her first two albums was "torturous and awful" until she learned more about working in a studio and getting what she wanted out of other musicians.

Despite that, *One Of These Days* (1981), *Moonlight Grocery* (1984), and *Gentle Of Heart* were serious production efforts, including guest musicians like jazz saxophonist P.J. Perry, guitarist Gaye Delorme, and folkies Roy Forbes and Ian Tamblyn. She even toured large for a while.

"It's great to have that sound booming behind you but it's so unwieldy and there's something lost in that large format. Now working small works better for me. I very rarely go solo any more but I still like a small unit because I can stop in the moment and re-

spond to my audience."

Kaldor still plays and writes using both six-string guitar and keyboards, and says she can write anywhere, even using a small tape recorder in her car if ideas pop into her head. She relishes the observer's role.

"I'm always seeing things and imagining, taking on the character of someone else. Maybe that comes from my theatre training too, but in the end it always comes from some part of you."

Her last album *Love Is A Truck* (2000) involved another keen balance between rough and tumble humour and sensitive reflection. Family is a continuing inspiration. Being married to Paul Campagne for over a decade has also rubbed off on her songs a little given his role in Hart Rouge, the notable Francophone folk band he shares with his sisters.

"Their blend of harmonies is so spectacular. I think that sensibility for harmony is creeping into my music a bit."

Choosing the tracks for her Vinyl Songbook 1980-89 (and re-recording two songs) was a real trip back in time, underlined by the fact that she just hit "the big 5-0" this year.

"I can't believe I'm still doing this. I can't believe I'm this old and still this immature. I don't think there are many careers like my own, and I still enjoy it. Sometimes I feel as if they pay me to get there and get back from the gig. What's in between is for free."

Best Foot Forward

They took their name from a song about an infamous jail. Captured Alive is their latest arresting release. Patrick Langston recently spent visiting-hour with Tanglefoot – proud, cultural mutineers all.

It's the music of everyday heroes. Exuberant and agile, *Seven a Side*, the memorable hockey song from Tanglefoot's new concert album

Captured Alive, zooms in on the hometown boys as they battle their mighty rivals. With the fiddle skittering like a careening puck and singer Steve Ritchie leading the vocal charge, the team sweeps from behind to glorious victory in the game's final seconds.

Sure, in reality it's just a song about an obscure hockey game in a small Ontario town almost a hundred years ago. But *Seven a Side* (which is how hockey was played back then) leaps from the dusty old Warton, Ontario newspaper story that inspired it to celebrate perennial truths.

"Canadians, I think, tend to relate to your workaday good person who does something extraordinary once," says Steve Ritchie, whose brother Rob, a one-time member of the band, wrote the tune. "It's appealing to find little kernels of universal appeal in everyday people. There's a sense

in which we think, 'That could be me.' There's very much a small-town ethos in much of the music we do."

Folks like those Warton hockey players do indeed populate *Captured Alive*, a sparkling collection of 19 tunes, most of them old audience favourites, recorded during three concerts last spring at Toronto's Flying Cloud Folk Club.

In McCurdy's Boy, a Cape Breton lad, fortified by a nip or two, clambers into the cockpit of a primitive airplane to pilot its maiden flight. The poignant *Keppel Township Love Song* finds an aging farmer reflecting on the constancy of love and the fickleness of the land. In *Second's Warning*, Tanglefoot's five robust male voices join in an a cappella tribute to the brave *Laura Secord* while reminding us that, almost two centuries after the War of 1812, the battle against American hegemony rages on: "There's women and men Canadians all/Of every rank and station/To stand on guard and keep us free/From Yankee domination."

These sorts of proud, energetic musical toasts to Canada have been the essence of Tanglefoot since it first began performing in 1980. Back then, the band was a trio of Ontario teachers – Joe Grant, Tim Rowat and Bob Wagar – weary of witnessing the flood of American culture in their students' lives. Traditional Canadian songs, period costumes and historical vignettes formed the trio's act, which gradually grew into the current repertoire of mostly original songs as the group evolved and its reputation blossomed.

The band's name, by the way, comes from a mid-nineteenth century song about Toronto's Don Jail, as grim a place now as when it opened.

Since those start-up trio days two decades ago, Tanglefoot has danced its share of the old personnel shuffle. Eleven musicians have worked under the banner at various times, with the last original member, Joe Grant, packing in his fiddle after the recording of *Captured Alive*, although he continues to write for the group. In addition to Steve Ritchie (guitarist), the current line-up is Al Parrish (bass), Terry Young (mandolin, banjo, you name it), Bryan Weirmer (piano) and Joe Grant's replacement, Terry Snider. All five kick in on vocals.

No matter what the line-up, few musicians tell Canada's story with greater gusto and nuance than Tanglefoot.

"The secret is not to just tell the story, but to find an angle that makes it interesting in a more universal way," says Ritchie. "Where the historical anecdote serves as the platform to tell another story," he continues, referring to *Crashin' Down*, a highlight of *Captured Alive* and which first appeared on Tanglefoot's 2002 album, *Agnes on the Cowcatcher*. An anguished ballad with a grinding, obsessive rhythm, the song uses the 1903 Turtle Mountain landslide, which buried half the town of Frank, Alberta, as the context for a cheating wife story. It's the very thing to give the long-ago disaster an immediate, human face. Seems the little la-



Connie Kaldor

dy ran off to Frank with Gamblin' Jack McGann, leaving her mild-mannered bookkeeper hubby stewing in his own juices. Stewing, that is, until he set out for Frank, murder in his heart. When he learns that his wife and Gamblin' Jack lie embraced eternally beneath a million pounds of rock, he wonders, "Was it fate, or the hand of God, or just bad luck that I was robbed/Of the chance to pay the gambler back?" Trapped himself forever by this unanswerable question and a moral quagmire (having intended to commit murder, should you still feel guilty when the deed is done for you? asks Ritchie), the poor guy returns to his office job, where bottom lines may balance but life sure doesn't.

It was such riveting, multi-layered tunes, plus some just-for-fun ones, that propelled Tanglefoot into outer space. Well, their 1996 album *The Music in the Wood* anyway. Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, himself a musician and a Tanglefoot fan, took the disk with him on the space shuttle Endeavor in 2001. The album, says Ritchie, wound up being dinner music on the sixth day of the mission. "When I found out, God, I was just walking on air. I was stopping people in the street and telling them, 'You don't know me, but...'"

Back on earth, Tanglefoot has been



Tanglefoot

busily wracking up U.S. and overseas tours, including their seventh to the U.K. this past summer.

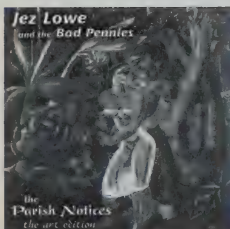
"When we started playing outside of Canada, we were surprised just how well this stuff travelled and how similar the response was," says Ritchie. No reason for surprise, really. The band is at its best before an audience, as *Captured Alive* illustrates.

"We come at you guns blazing. People like the big, all-male harmonies. We try to make the

arrangements so there's plenty of surface interest, so there's variety and contour and shape. Just try and sculpt every single one of them," says Ritchie.

A Tanglefoot show, he adds, "becomes this sort of participatory thing where, yes, the audience is sitting and listening but we're all part of this same experience. It's difficult to know how to put it without become really artsy-fartsy, but it becomes this very unifying experience."

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Beautiful: A Tribute To Gordon Lightfoot is 'a superior ransacking of Lightfoot's archives,' writes the Penguin Eggs' editor in this issue. There really are some remarkable remakes of classics such as *Sundown* and *Go Go Round* on this recording by the likes of Jesse Winchester and Blue Rodeo. And we have six of these discs to give away courtesy of those nice people at Borealis Records. We also have six of Jez Lowe and the Bad Pennies recording, *The Parish Notices: The Art Edition*, courtesy of the very kind staff at Tantobie Records. Fans of James Keelaghan will be familiar with Jez as they occasionally tour together. For the uninitiated, he is one of the best songwriters on the UK folk scene. All you have to do to win a disc is answer correctly the three following questions and e-mail your answers to penguineggs@shaw.ca. Please include your mailing address.

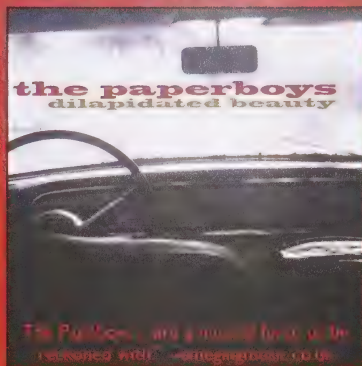
Q1: Which Ewan McColl song did Lightfoot cover on his debut album?

Q2: Name Jez Lowe's initial partner?

Q3: Who presented Lightfoot with his Juno Hall of Fame Award?

Answers to the Richard Thompson competition are: Q1. Si Tu Dois Partir. Q2. A 1952 Vincent Black Lightning. Q3. Beat The Retreat. The winners are: Randy Gibson, Mount Albert, ON; Scott Terrill, Victoria, BC; Lloyd Hodge, Eaton Corner, QC; Pat Battles, Victoria, BC; Marisa Deschamps, King City, ON; Jeff Buttle, Toronto, ON. Congratulations one and all.

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Photo By: ChrisTina Alonso

Lhasa

Room To Roam

*Lhasa de Sela! Now there's a name for the back of milk cartons. Disappeared without trace almost four years ago. Didn't she? Well, not quite, as it turns out. She actually joined a circus in France then settled in the ancient port of Marseilles to write most of *The Living Road* – the follow-up to her 1997 debut, *La Llorona*. By Roddy Campbell*

You'll recall *La Llorona*'s bold, blissful, blend of original and traditional Mexican folk tales sung in seductive Spanish created quite a stir in these parts. Sold by the lorry load, too, and earned the former Montreal-based singer a spot on the Lilith Fair tour. Not a particularly pleasant experience as it turned out but a prestigious one all the same.

But burn out led to exile. And it took until the winter of 2002, before she returned to Quebec to work on *The Living Road* with François Lalonde and Jean Massicotte as producers and a complete coterie of proven friends for musical muscle. What transpired in Montreal's Studio Masterkut in the following months will most assuredly rekindle interest in a career that, again, deserves widespread recognition for its exquisite character and flair.

While the inspiration for *La Llorona* came from Mexican myths, *The Living Road*

draws from the various volumes of traditional fairy tales edited by Andrew Lang. Why? Simple.

"They talk about magic," says Lhasa. "I think we've all got magical powers. There are times when we don't realise that we have them. But I think the journey of a lot of people's lives has to do with timing and how to use their magical powers. That is why Harry Potter is so beloved by kids and adults because everybody knows that somewhere inside they are magicians themselves. And that is what music is, magic. It's an invisible force that reaches in and grabs you."

Still, the underlying theme on this disc delves into Lhasa's belief that life is a living road – continually changing and frequently mysterious.

"What interested me was the fact that life was endlessly new. I believe life is continuous. I don't believe life stops."

She offers the subtly discreet and gorgeously, haunting *Soon This Space Will Be Too Small* as an example.

"It's about incarnation. It's about the cycle of one life. It's about birth, too. Because I was thinking about a child in the womb of its mother as it's feeling the space getting smaller and smaller because they are getting bigger and bigger. And then they have this terribly traumatic experience. They must think, 'Oh! It's the end of the world.' And that's the beginning of life. And as we go towards death we think that's the end. For all we know, it's another birth."

Dramatic and disarming and graced with as disparate an arsenal as lap-steel and glockenspiel, the music on this new disc owes as much to the past as the present. But unlike the all-acoustic *La Llorona*, *The Living Road* took a more of a liberal approach.

"This time we didn't put any limits on where our imagination would take us. So if it took us into things like electronic sounds, we just let it happen to see how it went. If it sounded too different, or weird, or stuck out too much, or sounded artificial, we would change it. But if it made a difference we'd keep it."

"It was like an intense inner experience and the desire to bring that out. It was a kind of inner world that inspired that album."

Well, the brilliant playing of young Franco/Lebanese trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf certainly helped. They met in Paris and Maalouf's four-valve (the extra one adds quarter tones) trumpet instantly enthralled, most notably on the Arabic-bound beauty of *Anywhere On The Road*.

"I love that song. He brought so much to it. On another (*La Frontera*) he sounds like a Mexican trumpet player (Herb Alpert, methinks). And on yet another, (*La Confession*) it sounds like old Cuban music from the 1950s or something. He's really versatile."

"He learned from his father from the age of six. Trumpet players can't start earlier because it ruins their teeth; it deforms their mouth. They have to wait until their teeth are formed. His father started teaching him Lebanese/Oriental trumpet and then he went to the Conservatory of Music in Paris. He just graduated – he's very young, 22, 23 years old."

"I sang with him in Paris and just loved his sound. He's got such a sensual, beautiful – the trumpet can be abrasive but his trumpet is so different from that – so smooth sound. At the same time it's got the melancholy Eastern thing. He's got a great groove. And I also thought his trumpet a very complimentary sound to my voice."

While Lhasa recorded *La Llorona* entirely in Spanish, on *The Living Road* she also sings in French and English. There's no magic formula. "They just come that way. They just arrive," she says businesslike. Her fluency in various languages, though, she attributes to her wayfaring parents and to her own travels.

Lhasa de Sela was born in 1972 in upper New York state the daughter of a Mexican father, Alejandro Sela, and an American mother, Alexandra Karam.

"They were hippies and they were living in a squat in Woodstock with my sisters. They got kicked out right before I was born so they went looking around the area to find a place I could be born in. They found a place in a town called Big Indian about an hour away from Woodstock."

For the best part of seven years the Selas lived in a converted school bus and crisscrossed North America with their four daughters. It made them, Lhasa says, a close family. They had no TV but read lots of books, particularly the afore-mentioned fairy tales edited by Robert Lang, ornately illustrated by H.J. Ford and G.P. Jacob Hood. Several of their etchings appear on the art work accompany-

ing *The Living Road*.

Music for the family came largely from Alexandra's eclectic record collection and her Irish harp.

"We lived in trailer parks," chuckles Lhasa, "and all the people would come out to see who was playing a harp in a trailer park. She played for herself. She loved listening to music from all over the world – Gypsy music, Arabic, Latin, Japanese music."

Alexandra eventually taught herself to play several Oriental instruments and ended up performing with a Chinese orchestra in San Francisco. There the family finally settled down when Lhasa was 11 years old. Throughout her teen years, she continually wrote poetry and short stories and, obviously, inherited her mother's love of music.

"I always sang. When I was about 12, I think, something clicked and I knew that was what I wanted to do. I started taking singing lessons with a really great teacher and I performed in front of my school. And then I started performing in cafes, open mic nights, and things like that. I don't know why exactly. I just thought something was right about it. I just felt that was what I was going to do."

She developed a repertoire that consisted largely of jazz standards. After all, a deeply emotional role model did spark her imagination.

"It was Billie Holiday. How truthful she is. How profound and truthful, and her beautiful voice. Some singers are like that they can't be artificial. There was nothing artificial about her. Edith Piaf was like that. There are some people who are truthful down to their very bones."

Singers such as Mexico's Chavela Vargas, Greece's Maria Callas, Chile's Victor Jara and Iceland's Björk, Lhasa also admired.

Her older sisters Sky, Ayin and Miriam, meanwhile, had set their hearts on a career in the circus. They enrolled in the National Circus School in Montreal – the only facility of its kind in North America. In 1991, Lhasa went to visit. She never really left.

"There was something different about Montreal. It was like being in North America but being in another world at the same time. French culture really attracted me. It's an incredible city, Montreal; it's intriguing and invigorating."

A friend introduced her to local guitarist and multi-instrumentalist Yves Desrosiers. Nobody could have imagined the repercussions. Lhasa lit a fire under Yves with her Gypsy and Mexican folk songs. With his encouragement, she gradually dropped her jazz covers and spent almost five years writing, performing and perfecting what would become *La Llorona*.

"It was like a catalyst. He really got into all the music I had been playing – all the Eastern European music and the Mexican, and all that kinds of things. It amazingly tapped into something that was dormant in him. He kind of took off and became really, really, at ease with that kind of music and then produced the album as if he had been doing that for years."

The title, *La Llorona*, (*The Crying One*) comes from a legendary Aztec figure that glides between the earth and sky, sighing and crying. Tales tell how she seduces men with her sad melodies, lures

them to a river bank where her cold kisses turn them to stone.

From this myth, and several traditional Mexican folk songs, Lhasa fashioned a recording of appropriately bewitching spirit.

"It was kind of imaginary music. It was expressing emotions. It was kind of like inventing a folklore – a tradition that didn't exist but sounded familiar but was new to me. Mixing all these together, it really gave me an amazing setting to delve into and sing my heart out.

"It seems like another life time. But I'm still really proud of it. I went as far as I could at that time and I think I'll be able to stand by that album for the rest of my life."

Praise for *La Llorona* was universal and unanimous. It eventually sold over 100,000 copies in Canada and 300,000 in France. It won a Juno as Best Global Album and picked up a Félix in Quebec for the same category. And Sarah McLachlan offered a spot on the Lilith Fair tour alongside the likes of Natalie Merchant and The Indigo Girls.

"It wasn't one of my favourite experiences ever," says Lhasa. "I wasn't very happy in that situation. It was very hierarchical. I don't want to bad mouth anybody but it was very hard. It was very clear that there were the biggies, and then there were the less biggies, and then there were the little ones, and then there were the real underlings."

"But some people were really friendly, like the Indigo Girls. I really liked them a lot. They were really nice. . . But because I was uncomfortable, I was shy. I stayed to myself. I probably missed out by being like that."

For all of Lhasa's success, by the end of 1998 two solid years of intense touring had clearly taken their toll.

"I needed to stop, that's for sure. I needed to take a break from touring. But also, I felt I needed to take a break from Lhasa – from being the singer, from being watched, because it can make you feel paranoid sometimes."

So she joined her sisters in France. And together they formed a small contemporary circus in 1999, which performed theater, modern dance, music and traditional big top skills that didn't include an-

imals. They lived in caravans and Lhasa sang accompanied by a trapeze artist who also played accordion and a juggler who picked guitar.

"It gave me what I was looking for – a feeling of being really connected to people, being out there in the world taking risks, being vulnerable. Working in a group is scary. It was a collective so there was a lot of strife. . . But being with my family was wonderful. I really enjoyed the physically grounding work, putting up the tent and getting my hands dirty."

The circus toured for a year and Lhasa ended up in Marseilles with a boyfriend. He had a yearning to live there and she tagged along. It seemed as good a place to go as any. Besides, it was by the sea.

Of course, she fell in love with the place, stayed for two years and rekindled her enthusiasm for performing and recording. In November 2002, she returned to Montreal to make *The Living Road*. It took until the following August to complete.

"I'm really happy it's out. I'm really happy that I'm going to be doing shows soon and I'm going to be singing. My dream was to make an album that I could be really, really proud of and I would carry out into the world. And that gives me strength to know that I had gone all the way with my dreams of music for this album."

"I really feel I realized that dream with this album and it gave me a very solid base. I can go out in the world with confidence because I am proud of the music I made. I expressed what I set out to express. I think I'll go further later but for now I really did what I wanted to do, and that's a wonderful feeling."

So, Lhasa, do you think it'll take six years for the next one?

"I don't think so. No. I hope not. But if I have to wait six years for it to be good, then I will wait six years. But I hope it won't take that long."

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Photo By: Frank Gasparik and the EFMF

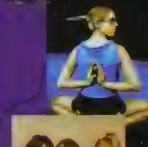
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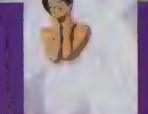
Harry Marx
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*Arrogant
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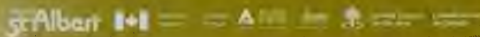
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Photo By: Scott Sandeman and The EFMF

Rosie Flores and Terry Clarke

Irish Rockabilly Blues

The moment he saw Gene Vincent open with Say Mama, Terry Clarke knew where his future lay. Johnny Cash would one day write sleeve notes for Clarke. His friends and admirers grew to include Flaco Jimenez, Guy Clark, and Butch Hancock. Roddy Campbell reckons it's time the rest of the good planet roots also took notice.

August, 1994: the 25th anniversary of Woodstock rouses an unusual excess of tattle. Joni Mitchell, coincidentally, is in Edmonton to play the folk festival. Mitchell wrote the Woodstock anthem in a hotel room in New York City while Henry McCullough played guitar for Joe Cocker on Max Yasgur's farm for the assembled 'stardust and billion-year-old carbon'.

McCullough, too, is set to appear at the folk festival. And he gives credence to the old saying, 'If you can remember the 60s you weren't really there,' when prodded by a local reporter. Me. McCullough left Cocker to join Paul McCartney's Wings, but in Edmonton that weekend he played guitar and mandolin for Terry Clarke – a tall, reserved, relatively unknown Anglo-Irish singer-songwriter.

Clarke had made two records: his debut, *Call Up A Hurricane*, and *The Shelly River* – an exquisite, timeless recording full of heart breaking nostalgia and unrepentant *craic*. It remains a fabulous fusion of Irish rockabilly roots and bar-room storytelling. But like Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs*, Paul Brady's *Hard Station*, Tom Russell's *Road To Bayamon*, The Innocence Mission's *Glow*... *The Shelly River* never quite received the international recognition it so rightfully deserved.

Clarke has gone on to record a rake of rousing, haunting and just plain beautiful songs. But damnit, still he remains virtually an unknown, at least here in Canada. All that may change soon enough, though. His current disc, *Green Voodoo* appears set for release here and plans are well underway for a tour with former Spirit of the West multi-instrumentalist Linda McRae in the New Year. They met appropriately enough at the Edmonton folk festival this past summer – Clarke's first date there since 1994.

"Before I left she gave me a couple of her CDs. I went home played her records and I loved them. I really loved them," says Clarke on the phone from his home in Scotland. "So I sent her a copy of *Green Voodoo* and a compilation I made myself.

She e-mailed me back and she'd flipped out. She said, 'I really, really love what you are doing. How do you feel about us teaming up together doing something sometime?' I said, 'I'd love to. What have you in mind?' 'Well, how about if I book some gigs for us in Canada.' Basically, I said, 'Yes. I was pretty excited about it.'

Terry Clarke will talk your ear off about music. He'll go on for days about Johnny Cash, Guy Clark or Butch Hancock. With wide-eyed wonder, he'll regale you with stories of childhood discoveries of musical heroes, most of them American. Born in Reading, England, 40 miles west of London, the son of an Irish immigrant, Clarke saw many of the great rockabilly acts of the '50s. Gene Vincent, in particular, had a profound impact on the then 15-year-old teenager.

"He was absolutely awesome. He had the English band Sounds Incorporated, which was an eight-piece with horns and stuff. The first song he sung was *Say Mama* and it was electrifying. He stood there with the spotlight on his face – that thing that he had, looking out in the middle-distance – he was holding the mic stand and he went into that and it completely blew my mind. I can remember being so excited, being absolutely electrified."

From that night on, Clarke set his heart on becoming a musician. He got a guitar while still in school. Lonnie Donegan was an early hero. Clarke's first band covered The Beatles and the Stones, then he flirted with soul. While he occasionally performed in local folk clubs, he really never felt comfortable there.

"That whole English traditional thing, Martin Carthy, Nic Jones and that, it was very much a finger style of guitar playing and based on traditional songs. I was coming from the rock 'n' roll, country side. I always went down well when I was in those places but I never really felt I connected with the organisers. I think I'd more a connection with the Americans. People like Guy Clark started coming in, and Steve Young, and Rattlesnake Annie. I started getting opening spots for them in the Mean Fiddler in London, and getting gigs in Oxford and Birmingham. I think the feedback from these people was what really encouraged me, because I was working solo then."

These gigs started largely through publican, Bob Moore. A chronic country fan, Moore owned The Radcliffe Arms – a tiny Victorian bar in the old part of Oxford – and began booking touring Texas troubadours like Jerry Jeff Walker, Guy Clark and Terry Allen. While the Radcliffe Arms held little more than a 100 punters, Moore would pack it to the rafters.

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"When I first met Bob, I was playing in his pub and we got talking after hours. He found out that I was a mad Joe Ely, Butch Hancock fan. Whenever he got somebody like that, I'd be the first call. It was fantastic in retrospect. It was a wonderful opportunity.

When they'd come in, I'd roadie for them. I'd a car and then I started opening on the tour."

Austin native Butch Hancock, a co-founder of The Flatlanders with Joe Ely and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, became a firm friend. He encouraged Clarke to travel to Austin to record his debut. Clarke had been to Nashville in 1989 to perform at a Gram Parsons, Clarence White tribute and had made friends with J.D. Foster, Dwight Yoakam's bass player. Foster also lived in Austin and he too extended an invitation.

Meanwhile, back in Britain, Clarke toured with the legendary Tex-Mex accordionist, Flaco Jimenez. Flaco had previously been to Europe with Ry Cooder and Peter Rowan and recruited Clarke to open for him. He wound up singing in Jimenez's band. Inevitably, their after-hours conversations turned to Austin and recording.

"I'll never forget, Flaco said, 'Austin is four beers from San Antonio.' He said, 'If you can get there, I'll come and play for you. That was the deciding factor, Flaco playing on it. The rest is history.'

Produced by J.D. Foster, Clarke released *Call Up A Hurricane* in 1990. Clearly, it was out there in outlaw country with the Butch Hancocks, Robert Earl Keens and Kevin Welch of the time. Which shouldn't be that much of a surprise considering who played on it. But put in the context of most of what followed, it does seem a bit of an anomaly. Then again...

"If I'm really honest, nothing gives me a thrill like Johnny Cash or the Everly Brothers. There's just some primal place in me that that music hits me.

"His death hit me very, very hard. There was something about him that really broke my heart, you know. There's people whose music I have always loved and I would be proud to count as influences - Van Morrison, Bob Dylan - but I've got more recordings by Johnny Cash than anybody. Vinyl albums, cassettes, CDs, I wouldn't say I've got everything he's done, but most of it."

Cash would write the sleeve notes for Clarke's third release *Rhythm Oil*.

"What I hear here is the real thing. Bare-bones blues, gut-bucket rural rock. This record carried me away to a long time ago, down a delta dirt road to a land of my musical good-old-daysing," wrote Cash.

They met fortuitously. Michael Messer, Clarke's slide player, has a brother who lived in Nashville. For almost 30 years, Alan Messer took photos for album covers for the likes of Willie Nelson and Stevie Ray Vaughan. He also did several for Cash and they became friends.

"We were doing the record and Alan had a tape of it and was playing it in the car. John heard it and really loved it. He basically offered to write the sleeve notes for us.

"I met him once at the Shepherd's Bush Empire [in London]. He had just put out the first of the Rick Rubin records. His people got in touch. I got to meet him afterwards. June was there as well. It was momentous."

However, before *Rhythm Oil* came the wonderful *Shelly River*. It's awe-inspiring story-telling is largely set in Ireland or about Irish immigrants in America. Clarke's father came from Sligo in the west of Ireland. He came from a family of nine, most of whom went to America and never returned. It's their stories that are told in *American Lipstick*, *Detroit To Dingle*, *The Leaving Of Sligo* and the beautiful, beautiful *Sligo Honeymoon* 1946. But there's also Clarke's pervasive and un-

bridled enthusiasm for music that weaves in and out of *Irish Rockabilly Blues*, *The Edge Of Shamrock City* (later covered by Ron Kavana), *Johnnie's On The Road*, *Song Of The Streets* and the brilliantly biographical, *Hometown*.

Clarke initially planned to make another record with J.D. Foster and a band. Foster had come to London to work with Green On Red and Clarke used some of their studio time to polish his demos. But his label went broke. Publicist Pat Tynan worked at the studio at the time, and encouraged Clarke to make a stripped-down, solo recording.

"Basically [Pat] said to me, 'I prefer what you're doing on your own.' He was Irish from Tipperary although he was brought up in London. He said, 'You should carry on because it is so different. If you can give me a whole album like that I'll put it out. Have you got any more songs like that?' I said, 'Yeah, I've got about three dozen of them.' I did it and that's what ended up on *The Shelly River*.

"If I had known I was going to make a record like that, I would have probably gone to Dublin and asked Donal Lunny to produce it. 'Martin O'Connor on accordion. Frankie Gavin on fiddle. And can we have Andy Irvine or Paul Brady to play mandolin.' I never would have dreamt of doing it myself. I would never have thought myself a good enough guitar player or mandolin player. So it took me by surprise how well it was received."

Shortly after its release, Clarke met up with Henry McCullough through a mutual friend in Belfast. Together they toured Ireland and North America.

"I went to Cork and Kerry for the first time with Henry McCullough. A lot of songs came out of that trip, like the *Rocks of Ireland* and *Frankie Murray Sings Kansas City*. They came straight off the road. It was a good time.

"[Jimi Hendrix's former bass player] Noel Redding came out to see us play. He was a good friend of Henry's. It was a lot of fun. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

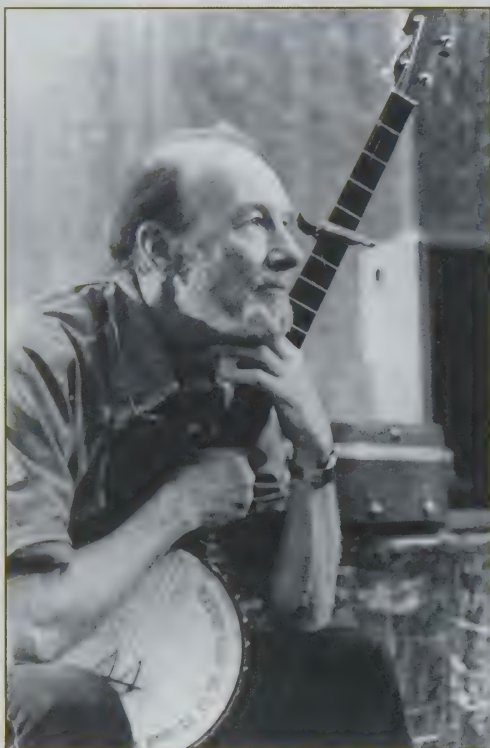
Henry McCullough had his own personal demons to confront, however. And Clarke would go on to perform with the likes of noted Texas singer, Rosie Flores. Butch Hancock, again, provided the introductions. Clarke released a further half-dozen discs in the past decade with songs as diverse as Conjunto waltzes and acoustic jazz ballads. The one consistency throughout, though, is his remarkable story-telling ability. He partially attributes it to the rich seam of Irish literature he grew up with. But there's also his old Texas compadre to thank.

"Hanging out a lot with Butch Hancock in the '80s, I think Butch opened a lot of doors for me, in as much as you can do anything really if you want to do... Being around Butch was exploding my head. Really, the man's mad. He taught me there is virtually no word that you can't use if you find the right setting for it."



Photo by: Harry Scott

Pete Seeger



Pete Seeger

How on earth do you start to describe Pete Seeger? America's tuning-fork? Father of folk? Bob Dylan called him a saint. And Joan Baez said she owed her career to him. Actually, we all owe a debt to Pete Seeger. Without him, the North American musical landscape would unquestionably have been a lot bleaker. Not only did he write such songs as *Where Have All The Flowers Gone*, *We Shall Overcome* and *Turn, Turn, Turn*, he popularized countless American traditional folk songs the likes of *Darling Corey*, *Home On The Range* and *On Top Of Old Smoky*. Of course, he also brought the five-string banjo back from the brink of extinction and nurtured the legacy of Woody Guthrie.

Seeger became the archetypal protest folk singer and paid for his convictions dearly. Harassed by the Congressional House of Un-American Activities Committee in 1955, he faced 10 counts of

Pete Seeger turned 84 last May, and while he struggles with his hearing and singing, he went into the studio the week the U.K. and the U.S.A. invaded Iraq and recorded *Flowers of Peace*, *The Dove*, and *Bring Them Home* for his current release *Seeds: The Songs of Pete Seeger Volume III*. *Seeds* along with *If I Had A Song: The Songs Of Pete Seeger Volume II* and *Where Have All The Flowers Gone: The Songs of Pete Seeger Volume I* feature the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne, Billy Bragg, Bruce Cockburn and Joan Baez reinterpreting Seeger's songs. The highlights are numerous and include Ani DiFranco's *My Name Is Lisa Kalvelage*, Steve Earle's *Walking Down Death Row* and Seeger, Bragg, Earle and DiFranco's remake of *Bring Them Home*. Because of his hearing problems, Seeger had only briefly heard tracks from these discs. Roddy Campbell started this interview by asking about his most recent, moving, recording.

Why re-record *Bring Them Home*?

It's because of the crisis in Iraq, of course. I'd

Contempt of Congress and ten years in jail. Freed on bail, it took seven years before the Court of Appeals dismissed the case. In the mean time, he was black-listed from appearing on television and radio and locked out of numerous clubs and concert halls. But ever, resilient, Seeger developed the college circuit and convinced impresarios George Wein and Albert Grossman to let the artists run the Newport Folk Festival and allow the profits to benefit the field of folk music. Newport became the prototype for nearly every folk festival in North America. He was also, to his great amusement, inducted into The Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

made the song 35 years ago. And Jim Musselman, the young man who runs Appleseed, asked, 'Why can't we make a new version of it now?' I said, 'Well, I don't think I could do it.' So he said, 'Sing the old one and we may change a version or two.' So we improvised in the studio and that's what came out. A little bit of the old song a little bit of a new one. *Bring Them Home* was not a bad song but a much better song was *Waist Deep In The Big Muddy*. There's nothing like a crisis to bring about an urge for song-writing.

Can songs make a difference?

Everything makes a difference but nobody can prove a damn thing. However, it's almost a consensus of opinion from the right and the left and the upside down that songs do have considerable effect. I've often quoted Plato: 'It's very dangerous to allow the wrong kind of music in the Republic.' I've also quoted an old Arab proverb: 'When the king puts the poet on the pay roll he cuts off the tongue of the poet.' I think of that every time I get a job on TV.

Humour, in songs like *English Is Cuh-ray-zee*, appears important to you.

Humour is one of the things that will save the human race. Thank God, in the midst of terror, people keep remembering humour. It could be gallows humour but it is all over these days. *English Is Cuh-ray-zee*, I do that a lot these days. It's very important to remember words can mean different things at different times and different places to different people. Marx had his own definition of what *class* was. You can *classify* people. Very few classifications are absolute. I mistrust absolute words of all kinds. I even mistrust the word *the* – the ruling class. *the* salvation.

One of the outstanding tracks on *Volume I* was Ani DiFranco's cover of *Lisa Kalvelage*. Where did the inspiration for it come from?

A letter from one of three women who put on their best Sunday-go-to-meetings clothes – just like they were going to chair a meeting of the district P.T.A. – and they went and stood on the loading ramp where a barge was going to be loaded with napalm to go to Vietnam. The police came and they were arrested. When they were arraigned in court they were asked why they did this. 'You're not hippies. You are respectable middle class women.' They said, 'We think it's a crime what's going on. And we're not the criminals; the people shipping the napalm are the criminals.'

One of these women, who was a German war bride, told a very eloquent story about how she got here and was asked, 'What did you do when Hitler was around?' She said, 'I was just a child.' 'So what were your parents doing?' And she had to

suddenly face up: 'What were my parents doing?' She found out they did not open their mouths but they didn't go to the rallies. It was a very difficult time for her. But in the final verse [I wrote for her]: But at least my children will not have to be silent when they were asked where was your mother when.

What did you make of the backlash directed at the Dixie Chicks for speaking out against Bush and the war in Iraq?

During the 1950s – I call them the frightened '50s – I was being questioned by the un-American Activities Committee. Some people were saying, 'Oh poor Pete, he won't get any jobs now.' It was just the opposite. I was not singing in night clubs, I was not singing on the radio, I was blacklisted from the radio and television. I was doing one night stands in colleges. And if the American Legion or the John Birch Society tried to picket me, all they did was sell more tickets. They gave me free publicity. And that's what happened with the Dixie Chicks. They got millions of dollars in free publicity out of that. They're getting more jobs than ever. You have to pity the poor blacklists; they don't know what to do.

My uncle (Alan Seeger) wrote a famous poem. It was on one of President Kennedy's favourites. I think it may have helped me stay out of jail. I was still under indictment when Kennedy took office and I wrote him a letter quoting my uncle's poem, I Have A Rendezvous with Death. I got no answer. Except, Dominic Behan, the brother of Brendan, was in a gang of newspaper reporters following Kennedy around Ireland when he went back to visit where his grand-parents were born. And Kennedy sees Behan and goes, 'Behan, are you the folk singer?' And Behan says, 'Yes, Mr. President.' 'Do you know that man Seeger?' 'Oh yes, I know him well.' 'A good man,' says Kennedy, and turned his back and went on with other things. I was in Kennedy's class at Harvard but we didn't know each other.

How would you describe your politics?

My politics have changed over the years. I tell people I became a communist at aged seven when I read about the American Indians. I was a member of the Young Communist League. I joined when I was in college. I, of course, resigned when I went into the US army but rejoined in 1946 when I got out. However, I found out how the whole world had made the mistake of going along with Stalin. Anything Stalin said was okay. My father dropped out [of the Party], incidentally, way back in 1938. He read the transcripts of the [Russian Communist Party] purge trials. It was clear to him that these were forced confessions. This was no way to run a world revolutionary movement. So he became an independent lefty in 1938. I didn't become an independent lefty until about 1950. The whole idea of having one country lead the rest of the world was wearing kind of thin. I still read the communist newspaper, The People's Weekly World. I read the Wall Street Journal occasionally. I read the New York Times every Sunday.

The five-string banjo was almost extinct by the time you picked it up in 1936. What was the appeal for you?

It was the rhythmic complexity. I played a tenor banjo at the time. In jazz, all they wanted me to do was clunk, clunk, clunk. Here was this banjo going teenk-teenka-teenk – mostly single strings – and this is what I do now. I don't even play a single strum anymore.

What do you remember about that first night you met Woody Guthrie?

Oh, I was tremendously impressed. For one thing, he had a tremendous sense of humour. It was an evening with Burl Ives, Josh White and Leadbelly and the Golden Gate Quartet. I even sung one song. It was the first time I'd ever sung for a large audience. I sung *John Hardy* the outlaw ballad very amateurishly and retired in confusion. I got a polite smattering of applause. But Woody Guthrie took the stage cracking jokes. He says, 'Yeah, it's very dry in Oklahoma. I once saw a telephone pole chasing three little dogs.' Twenty minutes later he had that audience in the palm of his hand. He could do anything he wanted. He sung clearly with no airs whatsoever in this rusty kind of a voice. You know what John Steinbeck said about Woody's voice: 'It's like a tire-iron hanging on a rusty nail.'

I must have seemed weird to him. I was a very young, inexperienced 20-year-old. He was 27. He once said, 'This Seeger guy is the youngest man I ever knew. He don't drink. He don't smoke. He don't chase girls.' But I had a good ear and I could accompany him on any song he played. I didn't have to hear it once. I knew not to play fancy notes when he was singing. I just gave him a simple rhythmic backing and if there was a space between the notes I could add a few notes. So he allowed me to play along with him and within a few

months we were getting along pretty well. He was up in New York now and we sang on what we called the Subway Circuit. You've heard of the Borscht Circuit – the Jewish hotels up in the Catskills. Well the Subway Circuit was the left-wing fund raising parties.

What is Woody Guthrie's legacy?

His honesty. His sense of humor. And his prolific output. He didn't try to write the world's greatest songs but he wrote something every day of his life. He really did. When Woody was with the Almanac Singers, songs just tumbled off his type writer. And granted, they weren't all great songs. We'd say more than once, well Woody try again. I was on an airplane going to Pittsburgh. I was reading and he was jotting down verses on a piece of paper. After we got to Pittsburgh, he just left the piece of paper in the seat. I picked it up and he was thinking as he looked out the window, what were those people in those towns underneath thinking about as they looked up and saw his plane roaring through the sky. And he looked at the pretty stewardess and wondered what she was doing tonight. When we got of the plane I said, 'Hey Woody, you left this on the seat.' And he said, 'Oh, I guess I did'. I said, 'Do you realise how envious Lee and I are? How we wish we could make up verses like you do.' He said, 'We'll I guess I've been doing it all my life.'

For once and for all, can you set the record straight about what happened backstage at Newport in 1965 while Bob Dylan was performing with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band?

I've told this version in newspaper articles, and magazine articles, and in my books, on the radio,



Pete Seeger at The Newport Folk Music Festival 1965

and the TV, but still people relay what somebody else said. Here's what somebody else said: 'I was so mad listening to Dylan I'd like to cut the mic cable.' What I actually said was this: 'Fix up the sound so you can understand the words.' Nobody could have understood what I said because I was hollering at the top of my lungs. I said, 'Damnit, if I had an axe I'd cut the mic cable,' I shouted it out. So George Wein was convinced that I hated the music. And so was the sound man and the other people. I hated the fact, and I still do, not being able to hear the unsaid word. That's one of the reason I don't like listening to records nowadays, I can't understand a word of what gets sung. He was singing a good song, I might say, *Maggie's Farm*, it's a great song. And later on, when I saw what the words were, I knew it was great. They were quite certain I wanted to chop the cable because I didn't like Dylan."

What songwriters impressed you most during the folk revival of the '60s?

Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Buffy Sainte-Marie and I think one of the great songwriters of the 20th century is Joni Mitchell. I heard her at the Mariposa Festival when she was only 20 years old, pushing her latest song *The Circle Game*. At every workshop she sang that song. It was rather silly she was plugging her song. I think she learned better. She's been through hard times and bitter times. But she's still a great melody writer. I think *Both Sides Now* is a truly great song.

How do you feel about being inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame?

I think it's a great joke but it's a great honour too.

How do you want to be remembered?

Oh, it's not necessary I be remembered. If I'm remembered by my family and some people in my home town that's fine.



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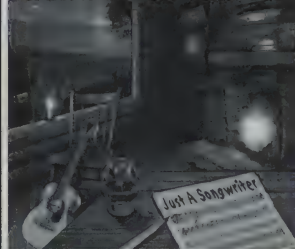
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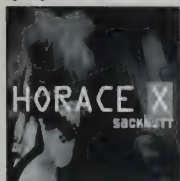
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Peggy Seeger's "Heading for Home" is a collection of traditional folk songs, most of them American in origin. This CD features Peggy singing and playing solo, while other tracks feature her brother, Mike Seeger, and her children, Neill, Calum and Kitty MacColl, whose father was the late British songwriter and musical activist Ewan MacColl.

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Harry Manx

Harry Manx

Road Ragas
Dog My Cat
DMCR 11012

Thank God Harry Manx decided to move back to Canada from India. We may have missed out on one of the best and most original musicians to come out of this country. In an era where musical fusion and global integration have gone somewhat awry, how soothing it is to know that it can work. Here is a man who has the soul (and fingers) of an old Delta bluesman, but the positivity and sensibility of a modern day guru. It can be quite a heady mix. Here we have a live album that fully captures the Harry Manx experience.

Take *The Gist of Madhuvanti*, where he begins by playing a Rajasthani raga on the banjo (!), and then seamlessly blends it into B.B. King's *The Thrill is Gone*. *Spoonful* becomes languid, almost sensual, and there's a lovely, sprightly version of Muddy Waters' *Can't Be Satisfied*. Since Ry Cooder flew down to Cuba, no other musician has been melding East and West quite like this.

Of course, there are the Manx originals such as *Bring That Thing or Sunday Morning Ascension*, and here they sound very fine. But the best song on the album is something you can't find on any of his studio recordings, *Take This Hammer*. With the addition of the Heavenly Lights on background vocals, the song transforms from a traditional work song to a full-blown spiritual. And you just know that this is what it should sound.

—By Shawna Biomante

Various Artists

Beautiful:
A Tribute To Gordon Lightfoot
Borealis/NorthernBlues
BCDNBM500

Bit of a reputation around here, that lad

Lightfoot. Wrote the odd decent song, didn't he.

And now for the first time, he is the benefactor of a tribute album. And quite the cast of characters executive producer Colin Linden has assembled for the task. The likes of The Tragically Hip, Harry Manx, The Cowboy Junkies, James Keelaghan and Bruce Cockburn... dust off such Canadian A.M. staples as *Black Day In July*, *Trilogy*, *Ribbon of Darkness*, but oddly enough, no *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

Sycophantic, this disc ain't. Indeed, the whole enterprise has a startling freshness from the combined opening excellence of the Cowboy Junkies (*The Way I Feel*), Jesse Winchester (*Sundown*) and Ron Sexsmith (*Drifters*). Sure it gets somewhat waylaid with the languid, doomed romanticism of Terry Tufts (*For Lovin' Me*) and Connie Kaldor (*If You Could Read My Mind*). And The Tragically Hip ought to have checked the sell-by-date on *Black Day In July*. But there is still major contributions from that talented man, Harry Manx, (*Bend In The Water*), and the essential Blue Rodeo (*Go, Go Round*—The Byrds seldom sounded this good). Include a fine, wholly successful makeover of *Song For A Winter's Night* by Quartette, and it all adds up to a superior ransacking of the Lightfoot archives. Beautiful? Oh, quite.

—By Roddy Campbell

Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros

Streetcore
Hellcat
80454-2

It's nearly a year since the way too premature death of punk icon Joe Strummer, and the loss of the former Clash frontman is still deeply felt. Joe was working on a new album with his band The Mescaleros at the time of his death, and his comrades toiled hard to preserve his spirit on *Streetcore*. Some posthumous albums are suspect in motives and execution, but not this one.

It features the eclectic sounds that marked Strummer's post-Clash work, and these suit his global and humanist approach. That is summed up by his moving version of Bob Marley's *Redemption Song* here. That song has been covered a lot, but never with such simple effectiveness as here (Rick Rubin produced this cut). Another fine cover is of *Silver And Gold*, co-written by Fats Domino. Tymon Dogg adds fluent violin, and lines like "I've got to hurry up before I grow too old" take on extra poignancy.

Joe has rarely sung better, with righteous authenticity permeating every tune. His Mescaleros mates chime in with songwriting assists and playing that values passion and energy over slick finesse. The reggae feel to such tunes as *Coma Girl* and *Get Down Moses* is a little watery and bland to these ears, lacking the rootier dubwise feel of Clash cuts like *Police And Thieves*, but that's a minor flaw. *Midnight Jam* is sonically adventurous, with Joe speaking over an ever-shifting musical backdrop. The rousing and uplifting *Arms Aloft In Aberdeen* (the spirit is our gasoline) is another highlight, as is the spare and affecting *Long Shadow*, co-written by Joe and Smokey Hormel (Beck). When Joe sings 'you cast a long shadow,' the listener may well have to fight back a tear. Lovely stuff.

—By Kerry Doole

Glamour Puss

Wire & Wood
Northern Blues
NBM0018

These blues chameleons distinguish themselves by their ability to play it all—injecting strong elements of Acacia and an overall 'kitchen party' spirit into their varied presentation. They have done their homework. This fourth album proves that, with the focus of producer-stringmeister, Michael Jerome Browne, they have hit their stride: *Wire & Wood* teems with newfound confidence. Never purely blues, Glamour Puss breathes like a rock band that loves its blues, R & B, and native Zydeco influences. Members switch lead roles across their repertoire but the strongest material emanates from Travis Furlong's muscular, blues-informed guitar-playing and convincing vocals (reminiscent of a young Dutch Mason) while Roger Cormier's contributions as a singer, songwriter and keyboard player are equally significant. The tight rhythm section (bassist Paul Boudreau and drummer Ron Dupuis) spins on a dime while high-torque sax player Don Rodgers injects liberal doses of R & B, adding considerable depth to an already full sound. Warm up to *Kitty Kitty*—a cocksure, tongue-in-cheek original that mines a relaxed groove, demonstrating the band's ability to play. *Hollow Man* hints at Peter Gunn with its tough guitar line and military-style snare. *Don't You Worry* might just be their signature sound—tough guitar, fat organ fills and a rock-hard beat. Their treatment of John Lee Hooker's *Boom Boom* brings things back to

the blues, however, breathing new life into the song and demonstrating an adeptness for arranging. Originals like *If You Miss Me (So Much)* – one of the album's best tracks – proves that Glamour Puss have come of age. The fact that *Wire & Wood* is nominated for Blues Album of the Year is simply icing on the cake.

– By Eric Thom

Arlene Bishop

Cut a Man's Heart Out

Blare! Music

777320113023

Arlene Bishop is a force to be reckoned with. Once this CD gets under your skin it grabs your attention and won't let go. She has a distinctive earthy voice that has a real cutting edge to it. Her lyrics are dark, soulful and witty. The vocal arrangements combine Arlene's own layered voice with cool male backing voices. The instrumentation is full of surprises – the electric sitar on *Metaphor For Your Life*, the surf-like rivet cymbal on *Half Plus Half More*, and the rockin' blues harmonica on *Au Revoir Superstar* being three of the more striking examples. There's a freshness and immediacy about this recording that stems from the way it was written. She wrote a new song and performed it live each week until she had an album's worth. This involved making bits up on the spot and improvising madly when she forgot what she had written. The sense of daring spontaneity has been well captured here.

Arlene Bishop has a strong pop sensibility that could see her sharing the charts with the Britney's of this world in future – which would be a refreshing change. The centre-piece of the CD is the title track – an engagingly honest look at male commitment rather than an ode to butchery. The overall theme seems to be love and relationships in various states of despair; examined through the distorted filter of persistent insomnia. Arlene Bishop explores it all with painful honesty but always tinges it with humour. She is a name to remember and this CD is worth spending time with.

– By Tim Readman

Dave McCann

and the Ten Toed Frogs

Country Medicine

Old Man River Folk Music

MCC20870

Well, it's about time we had something new from Dave McCann as I've just about worn out his debut, *Woodland Tea*; it's been my constant companion on long road trips, an infectious blend of folk-inflected country music perfect for my tone-deaf vocal accompaniment. But now it's time for something new.

And Country Medicine delivers. *Sticks and Stones* is the first track, and it picks up exactly where *Woodland Tea* left off, with a loping country backbeat, mandolin rhythm, and McCann's Canajun drawl: 'Well the songs come down, down from the mountain, And they burned around in the

busted towns, You can hear them now out amongst the wounded, Forgotten words seldom spoke by men.' This is followed by the pedal-steel laced, *Leaving This Town*, with its similarly evocative references to 'shotgun shacks' and wind-worn landscapes where the 'bones show through'. I don't get it, most of the time, but it seems to connect with life out here on the prairies and I can't stop myself from singing along. *Cocaine Stole Her Brain* (no difficulties here) rocks like some crackling 70s country outlaw classic and would be top-40 in a saner universe. And the whole thing wraps up with the Motorhead-meets-Merle-Haggard thump of *Locomotive Breath* (although stayed tuned for the hidden track that follows). The musicianship throughout is top-notch and I guarantee this one won't be leaving the car stereo until the next Dave McCann record rolls down the pike. Start your engines.

– By Richard Thornley

Robert Randolph & The Family Band

Unclassified

Warner Bros. Records

CDW 48472 CD 164

There is one word that captures the reasoning for all the hubbub surrounding the somewhat sudden emergence of Robert Randolph's music onto the scene: joyful. A graduate of the Sacred Steel school, Randolph has combined his obvious House of God-born gifts with his instrument – the pedal steel guitar – and married it to his love of gospel, soul, rock and R & B. The results are nothing short of jaw-dropping, his audience broad enough to include rockers, funksters and, not surprisingly, the jam crowd who delight in his highly-charged, long-winded trips through time and his shoulder-rubbing with the North Mississippi All-Stars and John Medeski. At the same time, Randolph embraces the spirit of Sly & The Family Stone in his fevered delivery which, when combined with all these seemingly disparate influences, makes him relatively difficult to "classify" musically – as this record bears out (hence the title). Rest easy in the assurance that there is something here for every taste, tied together by a new artist who redefines the pedal steel in the language of rock-god-guitarist – a title he would surely cringe at, but borne out by his front-and-centre appearances and the marketing savvy that places the his guitar-heavy sound at the forefront of his sound. Unclassified is a true fusion of the many musics Randolph loves and lives to play for his eager, all-ages congregation. As suggested by the first track on this unique, ultra-high-energy release, *Unclassified* is clearly "Going in the Right Direction".

– By Eric Thom

Danú

The Road Less Traveled

Shanachie

SHA0078057

Their fourth album has Danú playing gripping sets with drive and maturity. The core band is sharper than ever, and two new players add some refreshing touches. Dónal Clancy on guitar plays with great smoothness and intricacy, weaving in well with the fiddle, flute, accordion bodhrán and bouzouki, and does some lovely work behind new singer Muireann Nic Amhlaibh. From the rich tradition of County Kerry, the vocalist makes a grand recording debut with the band she joined only last spring. On four Irish and one American song she sings with depth, class and fabulous tone. This group of players brings a classy touch to the tunes, and the sway and texture of it is of marvellous quality. There is a good range of mood in the material, lots of energetic pieces, and plenty of space too for some subtler stuff. *The Road Less Traveled* is Danú's best album yet, a rewarding trip into some rich musical country.

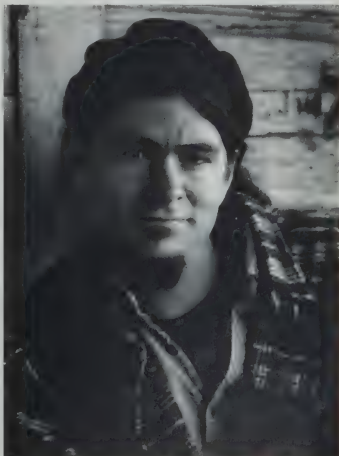
– By David Ingram

Hot Club of Cowtown

Continental Stomp

Hightone Records

The Hot Club of Cowtown has issued some great studio records. But they're in their element as a live band, and this, capturing them in front of a hometown crowd in Austin, Texas, does them full justice. They swing, whether they're covering Bob Wills, going through standards, or even rousing everyone with a stirring *Orange Blossom Special*. Elana Fremernan might not be the world's greatest singer, but she uses her sultry voice to great effect, and her fiddle playing is always stunning. Perhaps the greatest revelation is guitarist Whit Smith. He's always shown strong rhythm (and still does here), but when he steps out for his solos, he's fabulous. And Jake Ervin, holding down the bass keep a solid bottom to the sound, while still mak-



Dave McCann

39

PENGUIN
EGGS
Winter
2003

Recordings



Heitzman, Savoca, Brown and Rogers

ing sure it moves. Put them all together and you have something that becomes more than the sum of its parts. Quite why they decided to close the album with a studio cut (*I Can't Believe You're In Love With Me*) is a mystery, good as it is... but do keep going for the bonus track, and play it for your cat.

— By Chris Nickson

Finest Kind

Silks & Spices

Fallen Angle Music FAM05

Finest Kind was formed in Ottawa, in 1991 by Ian Robb, Ann Downey, and Shelley Posen. Their harmonies are both close and tight. What sets them apart from other similar harmony ensembles is their eclectic choice of material ranging from broadside ballads and Victorian songs to old time country music and Bob Dylan. The accompaniment is sparse and most often consists of a single instrument, mainly the fiddle. There is an excellent rendition of the saucy Ottawa valley classic *The Ten Dollar Bill* with its humorous account of an unanticipated pregnancy. There's the Copper family's oldest song *Shepherd of the Downs* which showcases their love of imaginative vocal arrangement. Dylan's *The Times They Are a-Changing* stands up reasonably well among these old favourites. I didn't feel the same about the King/Goffin chestnut *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow* which seems a little out of place. All in all this is a solidly performed selection which will please fans of The Watsons, The Copper Family, The Voice Squad and Coope, Boyes and Simpson.

— By Tim Readman

Quill-Tolhurst

So Rudely Interrupted

True North

TND 309

The name of Greg Quill will be familiar to Toronto roots music fans as the veteran journalist covers that beat for The Toronto Star. Before be-

coming a journalist, Greg was a popular singer-songwriter in his native Australia. He fronted the country-rock band Country Radio in the '70s, a group whose lineup also comprised of guitarist Kerry Tolhurst. Kerry gained further notoriety in The Dingoes, then settled in the U.S., becoming an in-demand producer, songwriter and sideman. The two comrades reunited recently, and a well-received Australian tour helped spark the material on *So Rudely Interrupted*. The pair's creative empathy is apparent, as Tolhurst's skills as a producer and multi-instrumentalist (lap steel, dobro, mandolin, banjo, bass, electric and acoustic guitars) complement Quill's talent as a folk-based songwriter. Quill is no great vocal stylist, but there is a rich authentic quality to his voice that suits his lyric-driven compositions. He may have been a Canadian resident for the past quarter century, but the Australian landscape and culture still permeates his songs. Of course, there are very real parallels between that and Canada, so these tunes translate well. *The Boys Of Narabeen* features Aboriginal group The Pigram Brothers on backing vocals, but its rousing feel has echoes of Stan Rogers within. There's an effective contrast of moods on *So Rudely Interrupted*, ranging from the gentle sentiments of *Come To Me* to the more sinister feel of *The Killing Heart* (an album highlight). A solid piece of work.

— By Kerry Doole

Jen Kraatz

Ashes

Riverdale Recorders

RDR001

Jen Kraatz is a talented singer, songwriter, and performer, no question. Her blend of acoustic rock and pop has won her wide appreciation in Alberta and, one suspects, further afield. Ashes is her third solo recording, produced by Scott Franchuk, Kraatz herself, and Shuyler Jansen (Old Reliable). On *Ashes* she runs the gamut from playful, upbeat folkiness (*Tracks*) to bar-room blues (*Rockin' Horse*) to a harder electric sound (*Off to the Mill-*

and that's just in the first four songs! The constant throughout is Kraatz's strong songwriting and musical support from a number of other prairie notables, including Ben Sures, Mike McDonald, and Robin Hunter. If the album has a weakness it is Kraatz's tendency to adopt the same serene and breathy delivery for each and every song; over the course of the whole album this gets to be a little tiring. Still, *Ashes* is well worth checking out; its diversity and artistry deserves the ears of many listeners, of all shapes and sizes.

— By Richard Thornely

Greg Brown, Pete Heitzman, Garnet Rogers & Karen Savoca

Live At The Black Sheep

Snow Goose

SGSCD 1130

Recorded at the Black Sheep in Wakefield, Quebec, this live album is the first time the four friends have appeared on stage together. The result is wonderful, a true song swap. Imagine that someone recorded one of the best folk fest workshops ever; although the atmosphere is more reminiscent of a late night in a smoky club. They manage to achieve that most elusive of sounds, balancing intimacy and playfulness and surrounding it all with a warm acoustic echo.

Karen, Greg, and Garnet share vocal duties; Greg and Garnet play acoustic guitar; Pete plays a mean resonating electric guitar; Garnet fills out the sound with fiddle and flute and Karen provides the percussion. The songs are a mix of those written by the three vocalists and a selection of covers, mostly traditional folk tunes. To be honest, I like these the best, especially when they segue *Beulah Land* into one of the best versions of *Goodnight Irene* I've heard. There's also Garnet's lovely version of Johnny Cash's *I Still Miss Someone*.

That's not to say that the rest of the album isn't fine. For a group that claims not to have performed together before, they have remarkable cohesion. In fact, I'd say that this album is better than most of the albums any of the four have put out separately. Pick up this disc, pour yourself a stiff drink, dim the lights, light a few candles and enjoy.

— By Shawna Biomante

Doug Cox and Todd Butler

Dobro and Guitar

Pacific Music Marketing

The title suggests rowdy blues and country, but that isn't the case. The music is more akin to the instrumental, folk-jazz hybrid that Windham Hill records became famous for 20 years ago. After the shock and confusion clear and a new age tranquility overcomes the body, an exceptionally high amount of six-string virtuosity is evident. Considering the set of duets was cut live without overdubs, Cox and Butler have remarkable chemistry.

Former Ken Hamm sideman Cox pushes the accepted boundaries for what an acoustic lap steel is generally confined to. After all, his complex melodies navigate through more chord changes

than the average blues or country ditty and he sometimes adds background percussion with his strings. Erstwhile comedy tunesmith Butler emerges as the surprise show-off with his over-the-top flat picking. The more fast and furious he plays, the better the disc gets as it eases the listener out of relaxation.

Highlights include the pseudo-flamenco *East of Dopyera* featuring Butler speeding through scales as Cox rolls off percussive arpeggios from his Dobro and the token blues *More Musta* showcasing the duo's ability to trade-off leads and weave in and out of each other's parts.

— By Bob Keelaghan

Sharon Shannon

Libertango
Daisy Discs
DLCD009

She's at it again. Let the West Clare accordion wizard loose in a studio, and she'll invite in a clutch of her friends, burst out with an irrepressible flow of ideas, and set about recording another knockout album. A mix of songs and tunes, *Libertango* is Sharon Shannon's latest, and it's a grand musical adventure.

Strong vocals grace this release. Sinéad O'Connor, Roisin Elsafty, Pauline Scanlon, and Marvel all contribute entrancing songs, as does the late Kirsty MacColl (from *Each Little Thing*) on an otherwise new version of the title track.

Sharon, and her core band of sister Mary and Jim Murray, are joined by Nollaig Casey, Trevor Hutchinson, and a raft of stellar players on a diverse lot of brilliant pieces. The Clare maestros sensational accordion work sometimes overshadows her skill on fiddle and whistle, but she plays the lot here, and tops off every track with that magic touch she brings to everything she plays. *Libertango* is full of the spark and creativity of an exuberant soul. It swings and it sways, one stunning track after another.

— By David Ingram



Sharon Shannon

Martin Simpson

Righteousness and Humidity:
Red House records
RHRCD169

The sticker on the CD face says "Arguably the finest finger-style acoustic guitarist on the planet — Chicago Tribune". Now I'm not about to start arguing with the Chicago Tribune. And Martin's new CD is not going to do his deserved reputation any harm. In fact, it will only enhance it.

Righteousness and Humidity features traditional songs and tunes from the southern U.S. mixed with original compositions in the style. Martin puts an assortment of slide guitars, banjos, ukuleles, electric guitars and lap steels through their paces drawing out great tunes and songs in the process. The CD also features guest appearances from Steele Span's Rick Kemp and Radiators Dave Malone and Reggie Scanlan.

And once again, because of the reputation of his fingers, I was surprised at the strength of his voice. He is great vocal interpreter of American music — for a lad from Scunthorpe. His performances on *Righteousness and Humidity* are electric and just soar — 16 wonderful and varied pieces, not a dud in the bunch.

So put it on, sit back, and take a journey to N 'awlins' and surrounds. Plus Martin, being a gracious tour guide, provides tunings, histories on the traditional tunes, and anecdotes on the originals. So it is a teaching aid as well as a guide. But first and foremost — it is a hell of a musical experience. We've come to expect no less from Mr. Simpson and he delivers, yet again, another stunning piece of work to cherish.

— By les siemienik

Buck 65

Talkin' Honkey Blues
Warner Bros.
2 60397

Let's start by saying that Buck 65 is not your typical hip hop artist. And coming from Halifax, Nova Scotia, one wouldn't expect him to be either. Buck 65 actually is fresh, exciting, intelligent and original and has expanded his sound into areas that other rappers wouldn't dare go, rooting his music and lyrics in such non-typical hip hop genres as country, folk, reggae and blues. *Talkin' Honkey Blues* is filled with well written characters depicted in stories of brokenness, and are told in a way that will remind you more of Tom Waits than say, Notorious B.I.G. Four eggs out of five.

— By Chris Connelly

Dervish

Spirit
Whirling Discs
WHRLCD7

County Sligo, Ireland, has long produced excellent musicians, with something special about their artistry and touch. We are fortunate to live in the Dervish era, wherein all the key elements have co-

alesced brilliantly in one band. Right out of the gate they hit full stride on the *John Blessing* reels, and never let up. On songs like *Fair Haired Boy*, *Soldier Laddie*, *The Cocks Are Crowing* and *Boots of Spanish Leather*, Cathy Jordan displays her great charm and talent. Guitarist Séamus O'Dowd sings a number too, and anchors the strong rhythm section behind the fiddle, flute and accordion on seven sets of tunes. It's pedal to the boards as this dazzling group plays 21st Century Sligo music with a full tank and faces to the wind. Soaring and swooping through their well-chosen material, Dervish is a joy to hear. Spirit presents an essential listening experience to be picked up on today, no delays please.

— By David Ingram

David Gillis

When You've Got a Dream
Independent
DPG-15362

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Dave Gillis won the Gamble Rogers freestyle guitar competition in May of 2001. The guitar chops you'd expect from that are evident on this debut disc in such instrumental tracks as *She's So Far* and *Twirl Twirl Little Girl*, as is a quirky humor evident in the inclusion of the theme from a certain web spinner's TV show on the *Spiderman/The Chase* medley. Unlike his friend, guitar monster Don Ross (who also guests on the disc), Gillis isn't satisfied with being a serious guitarist and composer but competes in the singer/songwriter categories as well. The remainder of the disc is a collection of variously successful folk-rock songs. On the plus side, Gillis has an attractive, off-beat, plaintive voice and a penchant for slightly bizarre lyrics: 'You are a Mercedes Benz, I'm a snow blower'. On the minus side, he falls into some beginner clichés, like rhyming 'head' with 'bed,' or 'dream' with 'scheme,' and phrases like, 'You don't talk with me, you just talk at me'. Still, it's a pretty damn strong debut and time will only further hone his considerable talents.

— By Barry Hammond

Various Artists

Just Because I'm A Woman:
Songs Of Dolly Parton
Sugar Hill
SUGG-CD-3980

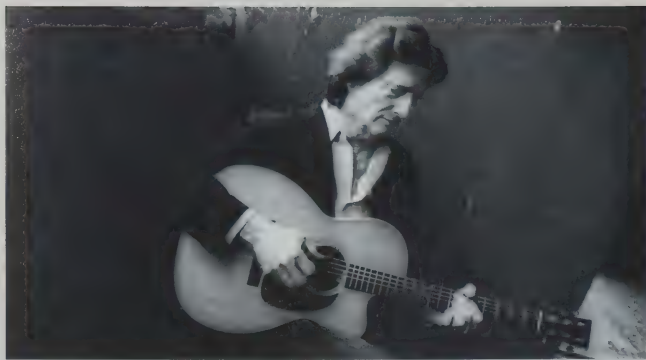
The larger than life persona of Dolly Parton has oft obscured the fact that she is a tremendous country music songwriter. That becomes clear with this generally impressive tribute album. Notable female artists from both rock and roots music cover Parton's songs here. Thankfully, the good far outnumber the ugly (an appalling rendition of the overplayed *I Will Always Love You* by the dreadful Melissa Etheridge).

Emmylou Harris shines on the sentimental *To Daddy*, though her earlier version of *Coat Of*

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PENGUIN
EGGS
Winter
2003

Recordings



Chris Smither

Many Colors (arguably Dolly's best song) would have been preferable to the unlikely teaming of Shania Twain and Alison Krauss (who also covers *9 To 5*). Kasey Chambers (the moving *Little Sparrow*), Shelby Lynne and Sinead O'Connor also make strong contributions, and the presence of Norah Jones (who does *The Sky Is Blue*) will certainly help draw attention to

an album that can be warmly recommended.

—By Kerry Doole

Compay Segundo

Gracias Compay
DRO East West

You wouldn't expect any surprises from an album by Compay Segundo, the elderly charmer of the Buena Vista Social Club, and the sexiest 90-year-old you'd ever hope to meet. There are some unexpected treats, however. This collection, which bills itself as 'the definitive collection', brings together tracks from several albums recorded by Compay in Spain in 1995, 1997, and 1999.

Spain turned its attention toward Cuba in the 1990's, before the *Buena Vista Social Club* gang had been recruited and recorded. A fascination with the older music, and of course, a familiarity with the language, meant invitations to perform for Compay Segundo, whose career had flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1980s, Compay had given up music as a career and was working in a cigar factory.

Surprisingly at age 87, he found himself in demand not only for concerts, but with a recording contract as well. His first album for Spanish label DRO East West turned out to be a best seller for them, and he was invited to record three more albums. This compilation, *Gracias Compay*, selects from those recordings. By 1999, at age 92, Compay's voice had become quite wavering, but his instrumental playing remained sharp and tasty. Compay was a prolific songwriter and many of the songs on this collection are his.

They capture the essence of that period in Cuban music — an everpresent sensuality expressed in dance rhythms with hummable tunes. The instrumental work on the album shows the inspiration

and respect of the Spanish musicians he recorded with in Seville. Also *Aintriugue* is a number recorded with traditional flamenco musicians. His energy never flagged, and his impish grin and elegant dressing, complete with white fedora and ever-burning Cuban cigar, embodied an unequalled *joie de vivre*. There are many delightful tracks previously not available in North America, including a recording of his most renowned composition, *Chan Chan*, performed with Spanish musicians in the Seville studio. The album presents a charming human being determined to enjoy life until his very last day.

—By Lark Clark

Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez

The Trouble With Humans
Texas Music Group
TMG-LS 4011

You don't expect second records from artists to be even deeper and more striking than their first great ones, but this disc is a happy exception. It's darker in tone than *Let's Leave This Town*. There are still playful moments in songs like *All The Rain* and the lyrics of the hidden bonus track, about the direction of the music business in signing artists like gangster rappers, where the chorus goes: "Gonna find me a killer, get me a contract, and shoot out the radio," but, on the whole, it sounds like they're exploring the darkest corners of their relationship with a soul-bearing honesty that's as scary as it is brilliant. Lyrics like: "Get it straight from the bottom, no matter how it sounds..." or "Some words should hit the air like silence..." give you an idea of the depths they're pulling from. Which is not to say that this disc doesn't have that upbeat Texas roots thing that made the first one so enjoyable. It does. But with a songwriter like Chip Taylor (who's now co-writing a few with Rodriguez, expanding her role even further) you're not going to get fluff meringue; you're getting juicy dark meat. Another must-have from this talented duet and their rock solid back-up crew.

—By Barry Hammond

Oumou Sangare

Oumou
World Circuit
WCD067

A massive star in West Africa, the Malian singer Oumou Sangare has released a double CD consisting of eight new tracks and a 'best of' selection from her first three albums. If you haven't got *Moussolou*, *Ko Sira*, and *Worotan*, then this album will serve as an excellent intro to one of the world's great singers.

Specializing in the Wassoulou music of south-central Mali, the 35 year old Oumou writes her own material, and in her lyrics pushes the boundaries of traditional subject matter way, way back. Intent on high-lighting the hard life of women in West Africa, she also tackles a range of social issues, like polygamy, cheating, intolerance, the dissipation of youth, and shows a lot of heart dealing with the death of a friend, a tribute to her mum, and the pleasures of love. Although she sings in her own language, excellent liner notes provide the key to the songs. As for us the music, Oumou Sangare has a beautiful voice, sings with grit and grace, and is a masterful performer. She is distinct too, and a real joy to listen to. Her band features mostly traditional acoustic instruments, adding beautiful textures to the singer's awesome songs. *Oumou* is an exemplary album from an extraordinary talent.

—By David Ingram

Chris Smither

Train Home
Hightone
HCD 8158

It never ceases to amaze me how little known and underappreciated Chris Smither is. Here we have a man who sat at the feet of the folk blues masters at the end of the '60s, and not only learned everything that they knew, but took that music to a place beyond where it could be pigeon-holed as "blues" or "folk". And his albums have only been getting better as he's been putting them out, culminating in *Train Home*, his best so far.

The sound for this album is more acoustic sounding, rootier than *Drive You Home Again*, his last studio record. But it's still full of the soul searching lyrics that he's come to be known for. Where else are you going to hear a song about having your car stolen, sung in the talking blues style of the '40s, with lyrics like "I know attachment is the root of my suffering" as in *Let It Go*? All of the originals on this album are quintessential Chris Smither, full of catchy guitar picking and foot-tapping rhythms.

The covers aren't bad either. He sings Mississippi John Hurt's *Candy Man* with such soft sweetness that you might miss all the sauciness of the song if you're not paying attention. And much has been made of his version of Bob Dylan's *Desolation Row*, less bleak than the original but only just, backed by Bonnie Raitt. My favourite though, is *Kind Woman*, an old Buffalo Springfield

song. It supposedly surfaced in a late night jam session that Chris and company didn't know was being recorded. It was re-recorded the following morning. As much as I like the album version, my only complaint with this disc is that they did not include that first version on here.

If you are already a fan, run, don't walk, to pick this one up. If you've never heard of him before, take this opportunity to get to know this blues master at the top of his game.

— By Shawna Biomante

Debashish Bhattacharya and Bob Brozeman

Mahima
Riverboat Records/World Music Network
TUGCD1029

Move over John McLaughlin and Shakti. Here comes the latest in Indo-Western fusion. Debashish Bhattacharya and Bob Brozeman have developed a — wait for it — Hawaiian-East Indian sound. Best of all, it works.

If some resemblance to Shakti does filter through the music, it would come from guitarist Bhattacharya who recently toured with the band. Bhattacharya is an innovator who improved upon the Hawaiian slide guitar, developing his own 24-string Hindustani slide guitar that he plays on this recording.

Brozeman is an authority on the Hawaiian guitar as well as a master of the instrument, having played with David Grisman, among others. The two are joined here by studio percussionist Subhashish Bhattacharya and singer Sutaapa Bhattacharya, the sister of the two brothers.

It is a formidable family. They tear into a series of ragas, the Hawaiian guitar oddly at home over the paddling tablas and in synch with the East Indian wailing of Sutaapa. Often the guitars mix sitar-type notes before sliding back into more dis-

tinctly Hawaiian phrasing. Generally, the slide-work lends a more bluesy note to the proceedings. That said, the band does a lot of the doubling on percussion/guitar and vocals/guitar which also characterizes Shakti's music. Certainly, fans of the latter band will equally enjoy this CD.

— By Charles Mandel

Bottleneck

Late Nights, Early Mornings
Black Hen
BHCD 14532

This is the second release from Vancouver's Bottleneck, released on Steve Dawson's label Black Hen. The group is comprised of Scott Smith and Robyn Carrigan, who share guitar and vocal duties, Jeremy Holmes on bass, and Liam MacDonald on drums. The sound is ostensibly alt-country-pop. Sometimes the mix works really well, as in *Diamond Ring*. Carrigan's vocals on the track, bringing to mind a light Sarah MacLaughlin, are set off just perfectly by her delicate banjo strumming. Other times, they come across as refugees from adult contemporary radio, as in *Summer Days*. Really, the more country they sound, the better they sound; and any song sung by Carrigan is good. Put those together and you have some real standouts. *Am I Blue* channels Patsy Cline to great effect. But the best song on the album is *No Spoke on Your Wheel*, a cautionary tale that will leave you humming it for days.

Overall, it's a pretty good, if uneven, album. Those of you who prefer a lighter, poppier sound will probably like it more.

— By Shawna Biomante

Various Artists

Shout, Sister, Shout:
A Tribute To Sister Rosetta Tharpe
Stony Plain
SPCD 1294)

Rosetta Tharpe — designated "Sister" by her fellow Penecostal brethren — redefined the category of gospel music by bravely merging it with more mainstream forms of blues and swing music. This raised the eyebrows of the church while endearing her to the spiritually-bereft and needy masses. Decca records helped launch this highly-charged performer into a sensation as early as 1938 but, sadly, her contributions remain largely buried in the history books. Which is probably the reason behind this bounteous release by a dizzying lineup of "sisters" that include Maria Muldaur, Joan Osborne, Odetta, Michelle Shocked, and Victoria Williams. Better still, the 'house band' duties are ably delivered with piety by no less than The Holmes Brothers. It's little wonder Tharpe became an important role model for many, thanks to her boundary-busting, willful ways. She ultimately paid for her transgressions and her association with the devil's music, yet her personal suffering underlines the power of her commitment and self-assuredness in a time when blacks endured the worst of inequalities. Many of her hits are found

here, including *This Train*, *Rock Me* and *That's All*, performed with obvious love and compassion by an outstanding cast of like-minded women with more highlights than can be identified. This recording is definitely something to shout about.

— By Eric Thom

Enoch Kent

Songs of Love, Lust & Loathing
Second Avenue
SAS2009

You might have seen him on the telly playing the role of a daft as a brush uncle Angus on Money Mart adverts. You know that fella with the red kilt and sporrans large enough to bed a stray waif, that's 71-year-old Enoch Kent — one of the big voices of the initial British folk revival. While Scottish-Canadian Kent stopped singing for the best part of 30 years, in 2002 he came out with the heart-warming, *I'm A Workin' Chap*. Fortunately, that burst of creativity carried into *Love, Lust & Loathing*. As the title implies, it's built around relationships — adversarial as well as complimentary. If the women's movement ever wanted a Marseilles, it need not look further than Kent's impressively moving, *Stanley's Song For The Women*. Equally affecting, *Edinburgh Maggie*, tells the true gripping, historical tale of a woman hanged for giving birth to an illegitimate child. Now there's a song that deserves life well beyond this recording. While Kent's voice may lack the strength of his youth, it, nonetheless, packs enough emotional wallop to raise a lump in the throat on Robert Burns', *Mary Morrison*, and the traditional *The Lichtbob's Lassie*. Once again, the arrangements are spartan but effective. Old habits... I suppose. Whatever, *Love, Lust & Loathing* marks another Kent triumph.

By Roddy Campbell

Various Artists

The Rough Guide
to Salsa De Puerto Rico
Rough Guide
RGNET 1130 CD

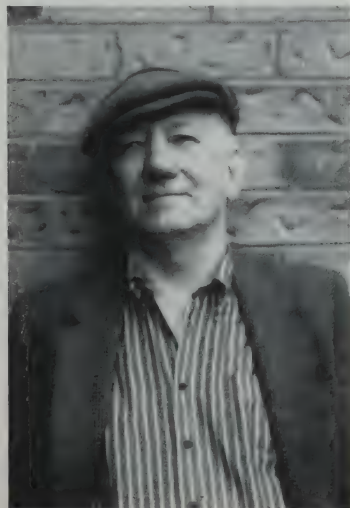
Various Artists

The Rough Guide to Latin Jazz
Rough Guide
RGNET 1089 CD

Various Artists

The Rough Guide
to Salsa Colombia
Rough Guide
RGNET 1112 CD

Salsa, which has become truly international in recent years, isn't known for its sparse arrangements. The musicians never seem to let up, which doesn't always allow for much variety in tempo or subtlety of mood, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. *The Rough Guide to Salsa De Puerto Rico* offers an excellent overview of the best salsa to



Enoch Kent

have come out of Puerto Rico. Some big names are featured, such as Yomo Toro, Plena Libre, Héctor Lavoe, and Nava, but even the less well-known performers leave their mark.

The Rough Guide to Latin Jazz CD was compiled by a different person but four out of the twelve artists (Jimmy Bosch, Tito Puente, Manny Oquendo's Libre, and Eddie Palmieri) also show up on the above-mentioned salsa album, albeit with different tracks. Last year's Latin Jazz compilations on Smithsonian Folkways and Columbia Legacy each have more tracks and more breadth but this one still makes a good companion piece.

Colombia has been a hotbed of salsa for several decades now and *The Rough Guide to Salsa Colombia* features an impressive bunch of tracks by the country's artists, including Fruko Y Sus Tesos, Joe Arroyo, The Latin Brothers, Yolando Rayo, Los Golden Boys, and many more, all drawn from the Discos Fuentes label. It's a very worthwhile compilation with plenty of variety. It belongs on the shelf next to the Puerto Rico salsa CD.

— By Paul E. Comeau

Bepper Gambetta

Blu di Genova
 Gadfly
 513

Gambetta is one of several great acoustic guitarists from Italy. *Blu di Genova*, the title of his latest album, refers to the material that was eventually turned into blue jeans, which comes from the guitarist's place of birth. The title alludes to several meanings, one of which is the fact that Gambetta's life and music gravitates between Italy and America, with regular forays beyond those two countries. *Blu di Genova* proves again that Gambetta is really quite a remarkable flatpicking

guitarist. On the opening track, and on one other, he plays both 6 and 12 string guitars while on various other tracks he is accompanied by Dan Cray (guitar), Gene Parsons (Banjo), his son Filippo Gambetta (accordion/flutes), Glen Moore of Oregon (bass), and a few others, but not by all of them at the same time. Gambetta also sings on a few tracks, in well-articulated English on Norman Blake's *Church Street Blues* and in Italian on two other songs. The CD also includes a video of *On the Road with Mama*, the opening track.

— By Paul E. Comeau

John Millard and Happy Day

Citizens Awake
 Happy Day Records
 HDR402

John is a Toronto based composer, singer and songwriter who mainly works composing for theatre. He had a brief fling with the music business in the late 80's with the goofy and original Polka Dogs. And if you remember the Polka Dogs, you know he is not your average singer songwriter. Putting this CD on is an adventure. The instrumentation of *Happy Day* is somewhere between a bluegrass band and a cabaret ensemble - three vocalists, vibraphone, string bass, accordion and percussion accompany John's voice and banjo.

After the third song I was hooked. Will you be? - I don't know. You've got to take a listen and decide for yourself. It's an odd collection of original songs written for theatre and other projects plus a traditional song and a hauntingly brilliant rendition of Wade Hemsworth's *Foolish You*. The arrangements are eccentric to say the least and bring to mind Kurt Weill and sometimes Brad Roberts of the Crash Test Dummies. And they are peopled with characters like Beady Boy (trying to grow a beard) and the fascinating Dutch Boys -

"wearing woolen pants waiting for their labour smoking cigarettes"

John Millard and Happy Day's *Citizens Awake* is

an odd musical trip well worth taking.

— By les siemieniuk

Colin James

Traveler
 Wea
 2 47389

While this critic has never been a devoted fan of Colin James, previously relegating him somewhere in the loose neighborhood of a Brian Setzer wannabe, he has done varied enough projects that gained my respect as a musician. This latest collection, further cements that respect. The original songs, mostly co-written with the other guitarist in his band, Craig Northey, are well-structured and pretty memorable. *Make A Mistake*, flirts around the edges of Bobby Womack-inspired Stones territory in a convincing fashion, with lovely, fluid, bluesy guitar work by James, weaving around the keyboards of Vincent Jones and Eric Webster. *Skydiving*, and the anthemic *You and Whose Army* are stand-outs. In addition to his own songs, he throws in a pretty funky, wah-wah drenched cover of John Lennon's *I'm Losing You*, to start things off, as well as getting down a decent Jimi Hendrix imitation on *Rainy Day, Dream Away*. Nick Drake's *Black-Eyed Dog* is an odd choice, but it also gets a treatment. All in all, a worthwhile journey for *The Traveler*.

— By Barry Hammond

Scarlett, Washington & Whiteley

Sitting On A Rainbow
 BorealisS
 BCD153

Chris Whiteley

While I'm Here
 Independent
 HTA14074

This is the third time the trio of Mose Scarlett, Jackie Washington and Ken Whiteley have taken time out of their busy solo careers to record an album together. They are also friends; the album starts with *False Start*, a botched beginning to *Lady Be Good* for which Ken receives some good-natured teasing. It serves to highlight the friendship and camaraderie that you can also hear in the music. They seem to have a kindred sense of musical direction here. Most of the songs are jazz and blues classics from the first part of this century, with only three exceptions. And even those meld seamlessly into the purveying sound, which is a light-hearted, nostalgic stroll down Gershwins lane.

They say in the liner notes that although most of the songs are old jazz, blues, and swing numbers, this album is very much a folk album. I'd have to agree: the sound is very much folk, achieved because most of the parts that would normally be played by piano or other instruments have been transcribed for guitar. Besides that, the songs are very much played how they were written. The three don't seem to need to re-invent the wheel. Why mess with the classics when you have fantastic musicians that can play them all properly? For



Mose Scarlett, Jackie Washington and Ken Whiteley

the listener, all that is left to do is relax and enjoy.

How many other Canadian artists are as versatile as Chris Whiteley? The man swings from blues to bluegrass, plays trumpet here and harmonica there, writes songs for country artists, and then puts out this album of mellow jazz.

Anchored by John Sheard on piano, Victor Bateman on bass and Mark Mariash on drums, what truly shines is Chris's trumpet and harmonica performance, playing call and answer with John Deehan's saxophone. Now, if this was an album of jazz standards, it would simply be a pleasant, but boring, listen. What elevates it is some real musical and song writing virtuosity. He wrote almost all the tracks, except for *I've Got the World on a String*, and Duke Ellington's *Do Nothin' 'Till You Hear From Me*. Neither of these really showcases the band at their best.

The rest of the album is much more interesting to listen to. *Jeanette* keeps me whistling the melody for days after each listen. *You Left Me Nothin But The Blues* is the perfect blend of blues and jazz, and *The Week That Ernie Died* is a touching ballad dedicated to Ernie Coombs, a.k.a. Mr. Dressup.

Overall a great addition to the Canadian jazz landscape.

—By Shawna Biomante

Rodney Crowell

Fate's Right Hand
DMZ/Epic Records
EK 89082

Rodney Crowell is a do-it-yourself kind of songwriter. While he might not have begun with great literary ambitions or talents, years of honing his craft with teachers like Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, Mickey Newberry and years of playing rhythm guitar, and being harmony singer and songwriter for Emmylou Harris, as well as being around arrangers like Glen D. Hardin, James Burton and Emory Gordy, or producing ex-wife Rosanne Cash's first five solo albums, have given him the kind of practical experience that can stand head-to-head with any but the greatest natural talent or divine inspiration. *Fate's Right Hand* is the latest example of what Crowell does best—laying down rugged, lived-in, original, slightly rocky, but always interesting songs that you believe he's experienced first hand, from bar room to bedroom, while dealing out some down-home, campfire philosophy. Another winner for Crowell. If you can't get into tracks like *Preachin' To The Choir*, *This Too Will Pass*, or *Come On Funny Feelin'* there's something wrong with your countryfication, partner.

—By Barry Hammond

Hot Toddy

The Salty Sessions Vol. 1
Festival Distribution
HT04

First class musicians have been flourishing in the hinterlands for years, and Hot Toddy is a good example. Their most recent album was recorded in



Hot Toddy

St. Andrews, N.B. (also known as St. Andrews-By-The-Sea), which is Canada's oldest seaside resort, and the home of the Salty Towers, where Hot Toddy plays from time to time.

The Salty Towers sessions were put together over several days with the Hot Toddy trio of Tom Ealey, Joel LeBlanc and Thom Swift, augmented by Feoff Arsenault and Bill Stevenson. Interestingly, although HT has been nominated for a number of blues awards—most notably the Dutch Mason Blues Award, and a couple of Maple Blues Awards for best acoustic band—this album is a lot more laid back and harkens back to some of the 60s and 70s jug band revivals (minus the jug). Anyone who caught the Original Sloth Band out of Toronto in the mid-70s will know what I'm talking about.

The musicianship is superb, and, although they play in a traditional style, all but one of the 14 songs is by the group. Their songs are appealing, but not stellar, and no one player, or singer, shines forth. I can't recommend the album as being worth a special purchase, rather, I can recommend them as being worth a live listen (especially if you're near St. Andrews), and you should be able to buy a CD off the stage.

—By Stuart Adams

Danny Mack

The Cement City Cowboy
Galaxy Cabaret
DakotaMack Inc. DMCD 0103

Despite being billed as, "Where Roy Rogers Meets Buck Rogers," there's little evidence of aliens on this disc, other than on the back and inside cover photographic art and a liner note story. What is in evidence is a solid record of sometimes-humorous, old-time country delivered in a lived-in, been-around-the-block voice by veteran Vancouver musician, singer-songwriter, Danny Mack.

Mack has been around since the 1960's and 70's. He recorded an album with the late Chief Dan George, had bands The Cement City Cowboys and Alberta Crude, and even did a stint in the movie

and TV business, contributing music for The X-Files, Poltergeist-The Legacy, Dead Man's Gun, and We All Fall Down, starring Helen Shaver.

He's back front and center on this disc and though he might be, "a little old, a little fat, and my hair's too thin," to be a star, as he sings in *Canadian Cowboy*, Mack delivers a fine fifteen song set, backed by a tight band, featuring outstanding pedal steel work by Jim Dorin and snappy drumming by Jerry Adolphe. If you like old-time country, complete with yodeling, you could do far worse than this upbeat collection by Danny Mack.

—By Barry Hammond.

Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band

Sweet Return
Independent
FBR CD 005

There's been major changes in The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band since their debut disc for the Traditional Crossroads label in 1999. Although this critic missed some of the interim releases, this latest disc, under their own auspices, sports a completely different lineup of musicians, with the exception of trumpeter, flugelhorn player and probable bandleader, David Buchbinder.

Clarinet player, Martin Van de Ven, went to Beyond The Pale, which also had guest appearances by David Wall, who now handles lead vocals and alto saxophone in the Bulgars.

What matters to have been beeced up is that almost all the players in the new lineup are also composers. Marilyn Lerner on piano and accordion, Bob Stevenson on Bb and bass clarinet, Andrew Downing on double bass and bass clarinet, Daniel Barnes on drums and the aforementioned Wall, all have composing credits on this disc. This gives the new work a lot of musical depth in the quality and breadth of material presented. There's also heavyweight special guest, Jane Bunnett, on soprano saxophone, flute and piccolo. Buchbinder's wife, Roula Said, pitches in

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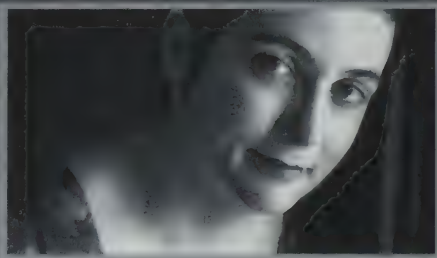
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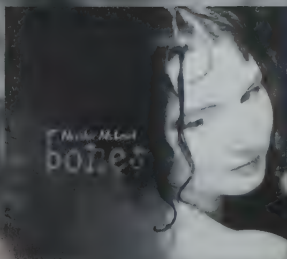
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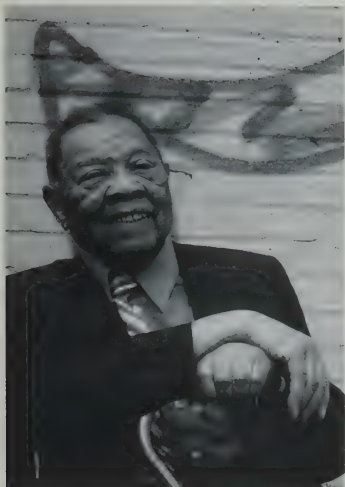


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Jay McShann

on vocals and zills on a couple of tracks, as do several other guests.

The group also puts elegant music to the poetry of Abraham Sutzkever, a Yiddish writer and editor, who remains one of the most distinguished poets of the Holocaust and the Vilna Ghetto Underground. The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band continue making a major contribution to both Canadian and worldwide Jewish culture. They can also swing out!

—By Barry Hammond

Jay McShann

Goin' To Kansas City
Stony Plain Records
SPCD 1286

Jay McShann has a unique place in music history. He had a blues-based big band in the big band era, yet his first record, 1941's *Confessin' The Blues*, with singer Walter Brown and twenty-year-old Charlie Parker, pointed the way to both R & B and bebop.

In his late eighties, now, McShann is far from being a museum piece, as this new disc, his third for Stony Plain, amply demonstrates. Recording in his home town of Kansas City for the first time since the 1950's, McShann, whose piano playing and singing still sounds a notch above many contemporary artists, gets fine backing by top Kansas city players: Tommy Ruskin on drums and Milt Able on bass. Duke Robillard, whose lovely tone and sensitive in-the-groove playing on both acoustic and electric guitar adds to several tracks, did the mix on most of the record, along with Tom Hiller. Highlights for collectors are a couple of rousing piano duets with Johnnie Johnson, who started the band which eventually became Chuck Berry's, a playful duet on *Confessin' The Blues* with Maria Muldaur, and inspired bowed and hummed bass solos by Milt Able. The disc has great sound, marvelously clear, with a tone as

warm as the man himself. There's even a bonus track—a nearly twenty minute interview with McShann in his home and at his piano with producer Holger Petersen. A must-have for all fans of Kansas city blues.

—By Barry Hammond

Patsy Amico & Brian Gregg

Blue Rain
Teeter Totter Productions
T-TOT 03

Brian Gregg, who's played in such Edmonton bands as the Angus Park Blues Band, Everyman's Tonto, the Big Dreamer Band, and recently as guitarist for Chicago R & B singer Lou Pride's band, teams up with singer-guitarist, Patsy Amico, of Pats & Jan, a children's duo, for this duet project, the result of their hosting The Little Flower Folk Open Stage at Rossdale Community Hall in Edmonton for the past three years. Both are fairly accomplished guitar players and the disc has added bits from harmonica player Rusty Reed, keyboards and accordion by Gary Bowman, bass by producer/engineer Peter Dykes, and drums and synth strings by David Bjarnason. The songs are pleasant enough mostly in a satirical, lightweight vein. Where the disc falls down is in the vocals. They're the kind of singers who probably sound okay in live situation, where their upbeat personalities gloss over any deficiencies. On disc, however, their shortcomings are glaringly evident. Gwen Welles' character in the 1975 movie classic, *Nashville*, kept coming to mind. This particular recording won't take them beyond local coffee house, restaurant, or folk club gigs.

—By Barry Hammond

Various Artists

Easy Pickins
Tradition TCD1090
RYCOTDISK

This is it folks, my first ever folk music film exploitation CD. What a hoot. The front cover delivers this one line sales pitch: Features I'LL FLY AWAY (From The Film O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?) BY THE KOSSOY SISTERS WITH ERIK DARLING. *Easy Pickins* is a real smooth MOR sounding CD title that obliquely aims at marketing itself to those new converts to old time country music who accidentally discovered American musical culture at the movies. The cover art, in sync with the marketing plan, features a hokey old catalogue drawing of an open back five string banjo printed on earth tone brown stock with fake aging marks at the edges. There is a single paragraph of information printed on the back of the CD that describes the music as follows: THIS LOW PRICED COLLECTION IS PACKED WITH ESSENTIAL AMERICAN BLUEGRASS CUTS. EACH TRACK HAS BEEN HAND-SELECTED FROM THE BLUEGRASS CATALOGUE OF TRADITION, AN HISTORIC MUSIC LABEL THAT HAS BEEN HOME TO AMERICAN ROOTS MUSIC FOR

NEARLY HALF A CENTURY.

The above description, related to you word for word, is about as helpful as the health guarantee found on a bottle of medicine show elixir. The strange and yet wonderful thing about this CD is that there is not a single recording on it that I would ever, describe in any way, as bluegrass. At first glance the combination of the title and the cheeseoid artwork reminded me of that late sixties Verve-Folkways classic recording *Folk-A-Go-Go* which featured among others, a well known a-go-goer named Peter Seeger. Upon further investigation, which means I listened to the CD and examined the list of songs and players, I was delighted to find a very notable collection of traditional American folk songs and tunes as performed by a totally heterogeneous collection of Urban folk revivalists and real down home, learned the tunes at mama's knee, folk musicians.

Five of the tunes on the CD feature the Kossoy Sisters recorded by Tradition back in the sixties, including their version of *I'll Fly Away* that was used in the movie. The other Kossoy Sisters tunes are 1960's folk revival standards and include *In The Pines*, *I Never Will Marry*, *The Banks of the Ohio* and the *Darby Ram*, all of them are extremely well done renditions of the songs. I can just imagine the discussion in the Rycodisc office that preceded the issuance of this CD. Whatever happened, it worked out okay, the mad scramble to produce an instant bluegrass album to cash in on the film instead produced a relatively good traditional folk collection. Included in the album are three great tunes by country guitarist and singer Mrs. Etta Baker, a relatively decent version of the Johnston Boys played on the banjo by none other than a youthful David Lindley, a few old folk chestnuts by a variety of other traditional players including Bill Cheatwood and a "hand selected" solo bluegrass version of *Skip To My Lou* played by Richard Chase. I wouldn't specifically run down to your local folklore centre to buy this CD but if you accidentally run into it, it's a pretty good bet.

—By Mitch Podolak

Brown Ale

Brown Ale
Independent

At first glance, Brown Ale holds some potential: two East-coast transplants, Glenn McFarlane and Les Smith, playing a mix of Celtic music, with songs and tunes from Newfoundland featuring prominently in their repertoire. Unfortunately, that's about the only positive thing that can be said about this sophomore release. The opening track, *Howie Meeker's Jig*, features Smith's typically messy flute playing, percussion that sounds like someone tapping on a cardboard box (but isn't), and McFarlane's pedestrian guitar accompaniment. An ill-advised attempt at rock on *Lannigan's Ball* fails to ignite, and their version of *Ode to Joy*

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PENGUIN
EGGS
Winter
2003

Recordings

is wretched: the bastard offspring of Steven Tyler and a twenty-cent mandolin. A couple of the songs from Les Smith provide the only moments of (faint) promise. A Celtic nightmare...

— By Richard Thornley

Joan Baez

Dark Chords on a Big Guitar
Koch Entertainment
KDC-CD 8622

You gotta' hand it to Joan Baez. She's still around and singing. At a time when most of her contemporaries are re-releasing retrospectives of the early days, banking on the baby boomers penchant for nostalgia, she comes out with *Dark chords on a Big Guitar*. An album of songs written by a selection of the best writers of the time: Ryan Adams, Greg Brown, Caitlin Cary, Josh Ritter, Gillian Welch, Natalie Merchant, Joe Henry and Steve Earle. But then again she's always been that way. Introducing her audiences to Bob Dylan and Robbie Robertson in the old days, and more recently to Dar Williams and

Richard Shindell.

Dark Chords is a lovely album — I like it a lot, but more for her choice of songs rather than her performance of them. Most of them truly had more passion in their original incarnations by the writer's themselves. Joan singing "will you comfort me in my time of need" is beautifully delivered but she does not come near to the agony and angst that Ryan Adams put into it first time around.

The album featured her gorgeous voice with production values you'd expect from someone with a career spanning 40 plus years and albums. Her delivery is honest and passionate enough to prove this is not just a mercenary stab at being relevant to a younger audience. She believes in these songs and these writers and continues to introduce her loyal audience to new and vital ideas.

Dark Chords on a Big Guitar just proves older and wiser performers can and should embrace the new. It makes them vital rather than being viewed as dinosaurs from another time.

— By les siemieniuk

Petra Haden and Bill Frisell

Petra Haden and Bill Frisell
True North Records
TND 312

Here's an odd one: Petra Haden (formerly with That Dog) and Bill Frisell duet on a series of their favourite pop songs. As one would expect, Haden contributes vocals and violin, and Frisell the guitars and effects. Where it gets weird is in the song selection. They do fine with *Moon River*, which is well-suited to Haden's sunny vocals and the languid approach that Frisell takes to his playing throughout the disc.

The same can be said about *When You Wish Upon A Star* and their take on the Foo Fighters'



Joan Baez

Floaty (which is weirdly interesting). But tackling Tom Waits' *I Don't Want To Grow Up* requires a certain vocal authority (that Haden lacks) and in their hands Coldplay's *Yellow* becomes more of a saccharine confection than was the original. It's all very nice, but nice doesn't carry the day if that's all ya got. And we know that both Frisell and Haden have so much more. Disappointing.

— By Richard Thornley

Meg Tennant

Driving With You
Independent

Although probably unknown to most Canadians, west coasters may remember Meg Tennant from the nineties duo the Lingo sisters where she teamed Janet Lillian Russell. *Driving With You* is her solo debut and her crystal clear and inviting voice shines on this collection of ten original songs.

The album is a tasty dash of urban folk with portions of country and bluegrass thrown in. The mood, established in the opening title track *Driving With You*, is melancholy and gentle. The songs are sparsely adorned with guitars, mandolin, bass, and fiddle but always delicately in the background so her voice is always to the forefront. A highlight is *By your Side*, a beautiful love song flavoured just right with John Reichman's mandolin. *Driving with You* is lovely, delicate debut from Meg Tennant

— By les siemieniuk

The Gruff

A Goat On Every Floor
Goat Tea Records
BAA11462

This British Columbia band straddles the gaps between traditional Celtic and folk-pop, with just a

smattering of bluegrass. The core of the band is three young women: Heather Cunliffe on fiddle, Phaedra Kemp on bodhran, whistle, harmonica, snare drum and feet, and Jennie Ritter on guitar. Evan Batee rounds out the lineup on bass, adding a contemporary edge and bounce to the band. All three women have pleasant, engaging voices which blend well together. Phaedra Kemp is the main songwriter and her lyrics, while having a certain timeless feel, still manage to include a modern woman's concerns. Cunliffe's fiddle playing is convincing on the traditional instrumentals, while the band's energy and vocals could take them into the pop realm in the manner of Great Big Sea. Compare their version of W.B. Yeats' poem *The Song of Wandering Aengus* with its rhythmic guitar, bass and melodic fiddle with Christy Moore's breathy, meditative version on 1997's *Now And In Time To Be* tribute album to Yeats. There's also an interesting, uncredited, hidden track with them reprising Gillian Welch's *Winter's Come And Gone*. The disc is a strong debut for The Gruff and should secure them some festival interest.

— By Barry Hammond

Kekele

Congo Life
Sterns's Africa

When Cuban music became internationally popular in the fifties, it took a particularly strong hold in Africa. Rumba-Congolaise, in the D.R. Congo, was a successful local version that emerged in the sixties, and five veteran musicians from that era have combined their talents in Kekele.

Four of them are singers with vibrant vocal chops, particularly Nyomba with a terrific tenor voice. The fifth key member is Syran Mbenza, whose guitar chimes with inventive lyricism.

The rumba is a shoulder shakin', hip swayin' rhythm, and it bubbles under the amazing songs. It all feels rhythmically Cuban, but the inflections are pure African, and the harmonies pure heaven. All the lads compose, and in fact, apart from one medley of Congolese standards, the entire album is made up of newly written songs in the classic style.

— By David Ingram

The Kennedys

Stand
Koch Records
KOC-CD-8675

Pete and Maura Kennedy are known for their song writing, their guitar playing and their vocal harmonies. Their music is as close to pop as it is to folk. In this, they're a bit like The Nields, whose song, *Easy People*, they cover on this, their sixth release. Like The Nields, they blur the lines of categories and simply play music they like. If they put drums and bass on it, fine, it's pop or rock. If it's just acoustic guitars, fine too, it's folk or country, or whatever. It's an appealing format for those of us who don't like labels, though it probably confuses record companies. If you just like music, no

matter what its category, it's fine. They have a fresh, optimistic sound that's uplifting without being maudlin. Lately, they've taken to being independent record and video producers, and writers of books, as well. More power to 'em. There's lots of worthy cuts on this disc, a few being: *Dharma Cafe*, the aforementioned *Easy People*, *Ashes & Sand*, *Dance Around In The Rain* and *Tupelo*. - By Barry Hammond

Fromseier Rose

Contradiction
Nunora Records

A record of mostly Scots and Irish music made by a Danish fiddler and an American pianist now living in Denmark? It's worth getting your head around that incongruity to enjoy the delightful duets between Ditte Fromseier Mortensen and Michael G. Rose. Whether on something as upbeat as the opener, *Popcorn Behavior*, or the stately *Taimse Im Chodladh*, there's a wonderful communication between the two instruments. Both Rose and Mortensen are superb, and sensitive players, working off and complementing each other. And when they back guest singer Niamh Parsons (whose voice is a perfect foil for their skills on the three songs where she participates), they provide just enough to frame the song without intruding on the singer. For the most part, this is a restrained album, even on the complex slip jigs, but when they do let loose, as on *Flax In Bloom/Stormy Weather* the effect is stunning. And their take on Fairport's *Crazy Man Michael* is enough to banish the original forever; it's just that good. But the entire album is an unalloyed delight.

- By Chris Nickson

Duke Robillard

Exalted Lover
Stony Plain
SPCD 1293

This is Duke at his rocking blues best, picking up somewhere near where *Living With The Blues* left off. Peppered with horns reminiscent of his Roomful of Blues heritage, Duke continues to explore with all parts blues, swing, rockabilly and rock'n'roll - defining a roots school unto himself. Full of surprises, Duke even knocks off a swinging duet with country sweetheart Pam Tillis but not before cloning Kim Wilson on the strongly T-Bird-flavoured *Real Live Wire*. Robillard's enthusiasm is infectious despite his obvious limitations: his vocals remain his Achilles heel, yet there's something about the passion that Duke brings to his recordings that tends to rise above such criticism. *Deep Inside* is powerful, R&B-flavoured track boasting his patented, economical solos and some inspired piano by Matt McCabe. Guest guitarist Debbie Davies adds fuel to Duke's fire on *How Long Has It Been* as the two trade solos and compliment each other's distinctive styles. The gears shift with the slow, funky *Tore Up* as Matt McCabe's ivories challenge Robillard's dobro, as Roomful horns alumnus Doug James, joined by

Sax Gordon and Scott Aruda, provide a slick backdrop. *Love Made A Liar Out Of Me* is a fun, country-esque rocker suited to Robillard's rockabilly-friendly vocals but it takes the album's closing track, *Travellin' Mood* (which owes as much to his gruff vocals as it does his guitar), to underline Robillard's sizeable grasp of so many musical styles, into which he seamlessly carves out a home for his sturdy guitar-playing.

- By Eric Thom

Jydsk På Næsen

Går'n, så garn
Helikon Records

With 24 years and six previous albums under their belts, Jydsk På Næsen have a lot of music under their Danish belts. A lot of it is dance music with a touch in various Nordic traditions (they're as likely to play a polska as a Danish hopsa, and many of the tunes come from their own pens). The lineup of two fiddles, accordion, and bass suits the sound perfectly, and the production by Danish traditional fiddle legend Peter Uhrband (who sits in on piano on one track) has a lovely intimacy. This is an album that's definitely about the music, rather than showcasing any egos. Everyone works together toward the whole. But there's no shortage of skill. A simple listen to the title track, inspired by Scottish hornpipes, or *Forkert Polka*, with its odd afterbeat, shows the quality of these players. There's even a wonderful tango (and tangos remain oddly popular in one of the Nordic countries, Finland), as well as a traditional song with the band's name (which translates as Jutland on the nose, by the way). Fabulous stuff - the Danish equivalent of a ceilidh.

- By Chris Nickson

David Owen

Red Hot Kisses
Independent
DO 001

Toronto blues singer David Owen was active on the local circuit prior to starting up his own successful advertising agency. Guess which role was more lucrative! His musical itch could not be denied, however, and he has returned to the scene with this indie release. A homage to his classic country blues roots, it is done in suitably spare style. Owen accompanies himself on guitar and harmonica, and that's the sole instrumentation. Big Ben Richardson and Alec Fraser help on the production and recording, and *Red Hot Kisses* has a nice clean sound. Staples from the likes of Robert Johnson (three songs here), Muddy Waters, and Blind Willie McTell are included, with a rendition of Stevie Ray Vaughan's *I'm Crying* the only contemporary touch. Owen's voice has a suitably earthy quality and his playing is effective.

- By Kerry Doole

Anders Norudde, Leo Svensson, Göran "Freddy" Fredriksson

Med Hull Och Här
Giga

For his second solo outing, the leader of Sweden's Hedningarna actually surrounds himself with two other musicians, cellist Svensson, and bouzouki/guitar player Fredriksson. The permutations of the three musicians offers plenty of possibilities (such as the dark moraharpa and cello combination of *The Nail*, and there's still plenty of solo Norudde in the mix. Whether on fiddle, moraharpa, or Swedish bagpipe, his commitment to Swedish music is quite apparent - as is his deep knowledge of differing regional traditions, which is evidenced in the obscure sources for many of the pieces here. He can work easily within them, or write his own tunes from them (as on *Stolen Waltz*). But while he's the undoubted star of the show here, the album simply wouldn't be the same without the other two. Their colors and textures really do make a difference, and push Norudde a little, as well as bringing out the inherent flavor of the music. Svensson's cello, in particular, works beautifully. And, to wrap everything is, there's Norudde's own *The Thousand Crown Polska*, a composition that won him that sum in a 1985 competition.

- By Chris Nickson

Abyssinia Infinite

Zion Roots
Network

Those who enjoyed the debut from Ethiopia's Gigi (from a couple of years ago), will be pleased to know she's the center of this release. It's a self-described concept album, a "melding of myth, sci-



Duke Robillard



Davy Spillane and Kevin Glackin

ence and matriarchy." In fact it also has something to do with Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but any thoughts of dogma go out of the window when you hear the music. This is what her debut should have been. The overall sound is similar, although more soulful, and with more of an acoustic base. However, it's more developed, and certainly better realized – and Gigi herself sounds more at home, whether on the harder-hitting *Gela* or the dreamy *Ethiopia*. Quite why this is on a small label, rather than on the might Palm Pictures isn't explained – in many ways it's a logical follow-up to her first record. Gigi is in better voice than before, and Bill Laswell's production is beautifully focused, while keeping an almost otherworldly atmosphere. The musicians – mostly Ethiopian – play with great empathy on the mix of traditional and original songs. An excellent record that melds modern and ancient Ethiopia.

– By Chris Nickson

Jesse Cook

Nomad
Narada
7245-93155-2-2

Jesse Cook Canada's master dabbler in world music – his style variously described as a mix of flamenco, rumba, pop, latin jazz, gypsy, Brazilian, Arabic, and American roots. On *Nomad* Jesse is joined by members of the Afro Celts and Hossam Ramzy and explores further his take on world music.

This time Jesse's dexterous runs and flamenco styles are fused with Arabic and Indian rhythms and textures. Purists may not like the experimentation and the ventures into pop vocals but Cook carries it off because of the strength of his playing.

He also has vocalists on this one – the Bodeans and Flora Purim. All pretty good and I like the fact he is exploring and working with other musicians because he could fall into a success rut – keep doing what sells.

But the flaw with *Nomad* is that he recorded it in Toronto, London, Cairo, and Austin and it does sound like it was shipped around a bit – a mish mash of styles, tunes and songs. And in the end,

this album suffers from a lack of fire – it's more like a series academic exercise rather than a cohesive whole. Very good exercises but exercises none the less.

– By les siemieniuk

Afro Celts

Seed
Real World
724358244724

The first question you might ask is what happened to the 'Sound System'? Well dropping that part of the name signals the arrival of the Afro Celts as a real live band. Gone is the reliance on a DJ and programs and samples. They have evolved into a more organic unit with conventional instruments and proper songs. There is still the same fusion of West African rhythms, Irish traditional music and cutting-edge dance grooves that has been imitated many times but rarely bettered. There are many other musical styles here too including Middle Eastern, Indian, and Spanish influences.

The opening track *Cyberia* features other-worldly vocals, Spanish guitar (courtesy of Jesse Cook), piano and a light ambient groove punctuated by Flamenco hand claps. The title track follows with its slide guitar, treated guitars and uilleann pipes. On *Ayub's Song/As You Were* vocals float over African guitars and percussion before Martin Hayes fiddle enters and takes us off in a new jaunty direction. *Rise Above It* is a great example of how to build a groove. Michelle John-Douglas' throaty vocal and Eileen Ivers' fiddle top off the whole arrangement perfectly. If this is the way Afro Celts are now serving up their music can I be the first to ask for more?

– By Tim Readman

Davy Spillane and Kevin Glackin

Forgotten Days
Burrstone 001

This is a traditional music duet album featuring unaccompanied duets and solos from Davy Spillane (uilleann pipes, low whistle) and Kevin Glackin (fiddle). This is the music they played as

young fellows in the early seventies – classic Irish music, typical of 1930's and 40's Ireland before the introduction of the now ubiquitous guitar and bozouki as accompanying instruments. It is Davy's first release on his own Burrstone label, and his only traditional Irish music album to date.

All the tunes are well-known session favourites such as the ever popular *Lark in the Morning*, *Pigeon on the Gate* and *The Trip Over The Mountain*. The magic is more in the skillful and sensitive playing rather than in the material being new to our ears. We already know from past experience that these two can really play and here they demonstrate to great effect how well they can play together. They each contribute one solo track, Glackin playing the reel *Lord Gordon Donegal*-style and Spillane wrapping things up with a fine rendition of the air *Port na bPucaí*.

This is the music of two masters completely at home within the tradition.

– By Tim Readman

Modeste Hugues Randriamahitsoa

Modeste
Space Shop Records
MODESTE001

London based Modeste Randriamahitsoa, from Madagascar, plays and sings nine of his own compositions here, seven of them songs, and puts out some very good music. From the first fast rolling guitar pattern you realize this guy has the chops. Check the sparse liner notes, and you see he has them on guitar, bass, percussion and vocals. A few pals play here and there, but *Modeste* has produced a true solo album. And a tasty one it is too. *Modeste* is an ace musician, razor sharp, endlessly inventive, his warm songs coloured by exuberance, tenderness, and buckets of joie-de-vivre. Guitar has been popular in Malagasy music, and *Modeste* has clearly learned his lessons well. He's also a pulsating percussionist with a charming voice too, and the album is a luscious, lively listen.

– By David Ingram

Rob Hollis

Highway of Love
Bitter Moon Music
Bittermoon 001

Singer-songwriter, guitar player Rob Hollis has previously placed songs with Cindy Church. Now, she returns the favor by singing a duet with Hollis and contributing backing vocals to several songs on his solo disc. Other musician friends contributing to the sessions are Ron Casat, Tim Williams, Gib Monks, Amos Garrett and many others. Hollis, who makes his home in Turner Valley, recorded the disc over a three year period in Calgary. The relaxed pace and attention to detailed craftsmanship show up in the final product, which mixes country, rockabilly, and a hint of the blues in a mellow fashion. Hollis has smooth, comfortably lived-in voice, that delivers his classic-sounding lyrics with the right amount of

world-weary sincerity. The guitar parts and instrumental solos are well thought out and nailed down tight, while still having a laid back vibe. Snapper cover art would have helped the disc to stand out, but that's a minor quibble in an otherwise pretty decent package.

— By Barry Hammond

Solomon & Socalled

HipHopKhasene
Piranha
CD PIR1789

Khasene is the Yiddish word for 'wedding', and what you get here is exactly that: Jewish wedding music reinterpreted in hip hop fashion. And it's (nearly) all good. Sophie Solomon is the violinist from the UK's Oi-Va-Voi and Socalled (AKA Josh Dolgin) is a producer/turmtablist from Montreal. In collaboration with guest players, Frank London, David Krakauer, Zev Feldman and others, they dance us through a party of samples, scratching, beats, fiddle, brass, and other instruments, running the spectrum of human feeling along the way. *Intro* gets things started in comic book fashion but then *Dobriden*, pairing Solomon's fiddle and Feldman's tsimbl, sounds surprisingly traditional. At other points we are treated to Socalled's rapping (Kale Bazetsn: Sure it's a fucked-up institution, economic solution to socialized absolutism...), old favourites that even Goyim like myself will recognize (*Gasn Nign*), high camp hip hop overload (*Hassidish*), and slower, introspective pieces, often prominently featuring Solomon's masterful violin playing. The album closes with two remixes: a dark, moody and beautifully beat-ful piece from Smadj and a more eclectic sample-saturated piece from Socalled. The only downside for me was the juvenile rap in *Hiphopkele* that likens the funkiness of polka to that of Bernado and Homolka. A small blight on an otherwise excellent effort.

— By Richard Thornley

Joël Fafard

Rocking Horse
Independent
JFI-1

Recorded at Studio One CBC Regina, this is acoustic and slide guitarist Joël Fafard's fifth record. After his 1996 debut, *Fierce Warmth*, he did one tour and one live disc with the band Skuj Macduh, before going solo again with *Farmer's Tan* (1999), and *Head Smashed In* (2001). On this disc, he's ably backed by Winnipeg violin and viola ace Richard Moody and Gilles Fournier on double bass. The disc is a collection of lively, warm, melodic guitar and sweet fiddle, anchored by the bass and viola that makes for flights of imaginative fancy and pictures of the musicians gathered around a glowing hearth fire on a cold winter's day. The kind of disc where you can just let your mind wander freely, undirected by lyrics or poetry. Very musical and highly enjoyable. Five bonus tracks of solo guitar are like getting an extra EP thrown in for free. A great addition to anyone's collection.

— By Barry Hammond

Greg Brown

If I had Known:
Essential recordings 1980-1996
Red House Records
RHR CD 171

Are these really essential recordings? If you love Greg Brown you already have all of them. These have been re-mastered, though. Ah, technology — does a song really become better when it is done with W/hi-Rez 88.2k 24-bit technology. If that's important to you, get it.

It seems the greatest hits package is a rite of passage in people's careers. Everybody has one. They're harmless and serve some purpose. If you don't know Greg Brown then this is a good start. He opefully it will make you go and seek out the albums these songs came from — 'cause there's a whole whack of other good ones. Or if you want a healthy smattering of Greg Brown, rather than the complete works of, then this is terrific.

But I still think the time, money, and effort that went into redoing the old stuff could have benefited Red House and us, the audience, more by releasing a new artist. A better homage to Greg's career was the underrated *Driftless* — a tribute album with some killer versions of his songs done, by among others, his daughter Pieta Brown, Iris DeMent, Ferron Mary Chapin Carpenter, and Lucinda Williams.

And speaking of technology — this collection is packaged with a DVD documentary on Greg called Hacklebarney Tunes. It's kinda' neat and worth watching.

— By les siemieniuk

Rebecca Levant

Ani Ma'am (I Believe)
Hebrew, Yiddish, Sephardi Songs
Independent

LEVCD001

Calgary, Alberta, Canada is not, perhaps, where you'd expect a collection of Hebrew, Yiddish, and Sephardi songs to be recorded, but maybe that's just an example of the far-reaching nature of the Diaspora. The strength of this collection is its simplicity — the juxtaposition of singer Rebecca Levant's voice with solo piano, cello, flute or guitar. The spare settings demonstrate the haunting power of the traditional songs. The obvious classical background of both the singer and players lend a certain formality and slight stiffness to the proceedings, but the melodies themselves are certainly moving. The disc is obviously a labor of love and tribute to the singer's roots and family, especially her grandparents. A decent collection with a strong local roots element.

— By Barry Hammond

Thad Cockrell

Warmth & Beauty
Yep Roc Records
YEP 2048

Although he's said in interviews there's no "alt" in his country, Thad Cockrell certainly has the pedigree. Coming out of the same North Carolina triangle that produced Whiskeytown, The Backsliders, and Tift Merritt, this second album from Cockrell is produced by Chris Stamey, who produced some of Whiskeytown's *Faithless Street* sessions, and most recently helmed Caitlin Cary's *I'm Staying Out* disc. It also features Jen Gunderman (Cary's keyboardist) on piano, with Cary and Merritt on vocal harmonies. Like former Whiskeytown, Ryan Adams, Cockrell is a strong songwriter with a plaintive, yearning voice. True, there's no irony in his performance, but Cockrell has the goods, when it comes to feel, if he decides to stay in music business, instead of becoming a minister, like his father. All tracks are good, but *Taking The View, My Favorite Memory*, and the hidden bonus track, *Misery Feelin'*, could become standards.

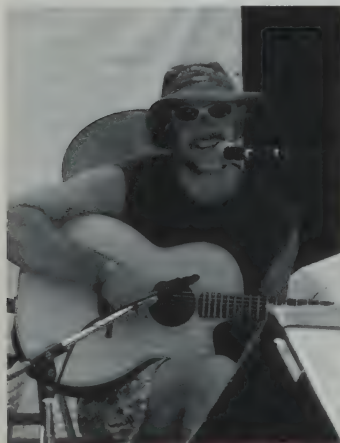
— By Barry Hammond

Thea Gilmore

Avalanche
Hungry Dog
743712

This is Thea Gilmore's fifth CD but she remains unknown to most — as she was to me until this review copy arrived. And I am glad it did. It is refreshingly different and strikingly English in its delivery. The lyrics are poetic and often challenging and display a surprising maturity for a woman who is 23 years old. Musically there are all sorts of styles from driving rockers to brooding ballads.

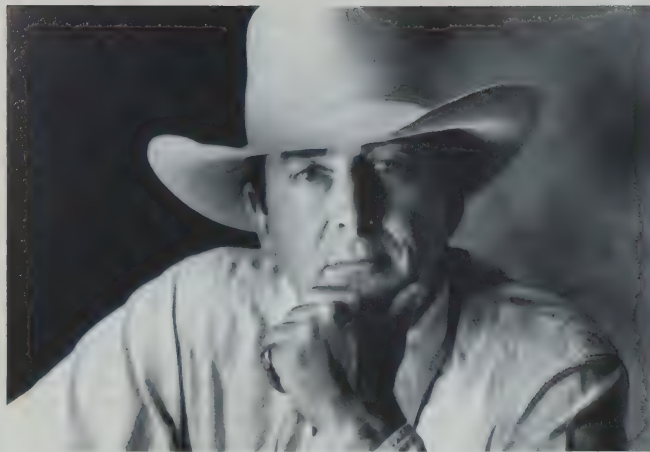
She is very ably supported by ex-Pretender Robbie McIntosh and long-time producer and guitarist and Lindisfarne/Rod Clements collaborator



Greg Brown

51
PENGUIN
EGGS
Winter
2003

Recordings



Ian Tyson

Nigel Stonier. They employ a broad variety of sounds from straight strummed acoustic guitars to samples and drum loops while still maintaining an organic and natural feel to the songs.

There are some great lyrical moments such as on *Rags And Bones* "they are racking up the weapons of blood and piss and guilt..." that made me sit up and take notice. No question about it Thea Gilmore is well worth paying attention too. After this release I'd be a bit surprised if she remains unknown for much longer. It's a grower.

— By Tim Readman

Grey Larsen and Paddy League

Dark of the Moon
Sleepy Creek Music
SCM 103

Dark of the Moon is the follow-up CD to Grey Larsen's and Paddy League's debut *The Green House*. Both are incredible musicians and although both are Americans, they have spent a lot of time steeped in the traditions of Irish music. Larsen plays Irish flute, tin whistle, concertina, and harmonium, and Paddy on guitar and bodhrán.

Dark of the Moon features mostly fairly straightforward arrangements of traditional Irish music, including two of Grey's original tunes, *Dark of the Moon* and *The Slopes of Mt. Storm*. Also included are some tunes from Galway melodeon player Michael J. Kennedy (1900 - 1978). The duo takes an academic folk approach to the music acknowledging lineages of the tunes.

This is not to say this is a recording for traditional fans and students only. The tunes are lovely and the playing is spirited, meticulous, studied, and beautiful. It'll sound great on those lazy snowy Sunday mornings with coffee and croissants. The additional bonus is that if you read the liner notes you'll learn a lot about the music. And if that's not enough for you, they urge you to go to their website for further notes.

— By les siemieniuk

Reverend Gary Davis

If I Had My Way: Early Home
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
SFW CD 40123

No lesson in the blues is complete without an appreciation for the contributions of Reverend Gary Davis, who influenced countless musicians with his East Coast-flavoured ragtime guitar.

Perfectionists of the calibre of Ry Cooder, Taj Mahal and Jorma Kaukonen have each sworn by his virtuosity, specifically his self-taught guitar technique. Born of the streets of Durham, North Carolina, Davis — who lost his sight before adulthood — absorbed the teachings of string bands and the tutelage of Willie Walker before combining the influences of gospel, marches, ragtime and jazz into a style distinctly his own. Ordained in 1935, the "Reverend" moved to the streets of Harlem and sang and preached his way into the hearts of the folk and, ultimately, blues community. These largely spiritual home recordings (he rarely returned to blues after his ordainment) were made in 1953 and predate Davis' more commercial efforts with Sonny Terry and others. More importantly, they were made in his New York home under the watchful eye of his ultra-religious wife, Annie. Ten of the tracks included were never recorded again, making this a must-have for Davis completists. His guitar mastery — particularly evident in his complicated rhythms and counter-melodies — is ever-present across these 18 tracks and the sound quality is better-than-average for the period.

— By Eric Thom

The Roadbirds

In the Wilde
A Genuine Find Records
AGFR 33003

The Roadbirds are Alvin Carter: congas, percussion, vocals, Jack Collins: upright bass, vocals, Jim Mercik: guitar, dobro, banjo, vocals and

Patrick McGinley: mandolin, guitar, vocals. They play with maturity and assurance as the cruise their way through this 6 song CD, recorded live in the Wilde Auditorium at The University of Hartford. There are three McGinley originals *She's Rowing Away*, *A Thousand Times* and *18 Summers*. He has a warm baritone voice that is well suited to this rootsy country-blues tinged material.

Unfortunately the other lead vocalists don't come up to his standard. Jim Mercik wrote and sings the James Tayloresque *Is This Enough*. There are a couple of traditionals — *St. James Infirmary* (not the best sung version I've heard) and *Little Bessie*. Overall this is a pleasant recording which finds the band enjoying themselves. It does however lack that spark that would make it really stand out from the crowd.

— By Tim Readman

Ian Tyson

Ol' Eon
Stony Plain
SPCD 1295

A word of caution — a few songs on *'Ol' Eon'* contain string arrangements. But their presence shouldn't be a surprise, considering that the album was recorded in 1973 (and in Toronto, to boot); Sylvia sings background vocals.

The album was his first solo effort, and five years after releasing it, he quit the music business, moved to Alberta, and began ranching. Of course, in 1986 he came back to the fold, releasing *'Cowboyography'* on the Stony Plain label that went platinum in Canada.

This reissue repatriates that first solo album to his catalogue on the Stony Plain label. While the early songs reflect a different production style, they're still Tyson captured in his early days.

— By Stuart Adams

Steve Earle

Just An American Boy:
The Audio Documentary
Artemis
RED2K 751256

Whether it is solo or with his ace band The Dukes, Steve Earle has earned a well-deserved reputation as one of the best live acts around. He can also be irritating in performance, frequently halting a show's momentum by taking on a heckler or again giving the audience his well-known views on such topics as the death penalty and corporate America. These comments are usually humorous or well-reasoned, but they can get tiresome. Steve being Steve, they are of course again captured on this double live album.

Thankfully, the music here is strong enough to compensate. Given that it was recorded at the height of the Iraq debacle, it is no surprise that songs from Earle's previous album, the often angrily political *Jerusalem*, are featured heavily. The liner notes aren't kidding when they credit Earle with 'guitars, mandolin, harmonica, vocals and rhetoric.'

Just An American Boy serves as a companion piece to the documentary film of the same name, due for release shortly, and that also helps account for the political focus. Steve's two best-known songs from the '80s, *Guitar Town* and *Copperhead Road*, are both included, but this is a long way from being a greatest hits collection.

The pace is varied well, with *The Bluegrass Dukes* lending a hand to *Harlan Man*, while such cuts as *South Nashville Blues* and *Hometown Blues* suit the sparse solo treatment they're given. The Dukes (led by guitarist Eric Ambel) are in sizing form, and brother Patrick and son Justin Earle make guest appearances. The first-ever released track by Justin, *Time You Waste*, is also featured, while the decision to cover *What's So Funny About Peace, Love & Understanding* (done with rockin' fire) makes perfect sense.

In his liner notes here, Steve refers to 'the war drums beating.' We should be grateful that his eloquent voice is helping shout them down.

— By Kerry Doole

Various Artists: *Broken Hearted Blues*, (Rykodisc Traditio, TCD 1092): Rykodisc could have said as easily called this album 'mining the vaults', rather than *Broken Hearted Blues*. The company is a British label that has released solo recordings by the eight traditional blues artists represented on the 10 songs.

The musicians, such as Lightnin' Hopkins, Leadbelly, Odetta and Big Bill Broonzy, are all recognizable, even though the songs selected aren't necessarily their signature tunes.

But the sound is quite good, and if you're looking for a particular song (or want a simple representation of the artists), the album is worth considering if the price is right. — By Stuart Adams

Various Artists: *Classic Blues* (Smithsonian/Folkways SFW CD40134)

This new collection is intended as a wide cut sampler of some of the recordings in the Smithsonian Folkways archives. The bad news is that Moses Asch didn't actually start to record blues artists until 1941, so the early delta and east coast styles are missing. The good news is this collection spans from that 1941 Leadbelly recording all the way to a 1992 recording of Etta Baker. In between features music made during some of the most exciting and creative periods in blues history.

Now, by their own admission, the recordings made by Smithsonian were influenced by what New York (and white) audiences perceived as blues music, namely the primitive folk blues and protest songs aspect of it, ignoring what African-American audiences preferred at the time. Therefore the catalogue heavily features artists that successfully made the crossover to white audiences during the folk revival of the '50s and '60s. Not that this is bad; the music made by the likes of Big Bill Broonzy, Honeyboy Edwards, and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee are some of the best on the album.

If you're somewhat of an early blues connoisseur, you probably have a lot of these songs some-

where in your collection. But the disc does contain some field recordings that have been hard to get until now. There's a 1940s version of *Black Woman* sung by an unaccompanied Vera Hall that's stunning. Also *Clog Dance*, performed by a (supposedly) drunk Champion Jack Dupree, but it's the anti-clerical *Jimmy Bell* by Cat Iron that's truly arresting. People looking for a broad-based intro to earlier blues would do well to pick up this disc. More experienced blues fans would also do well with this, at the very least to further explore the vast, untapped Folkways archives. — By Shawna Biomante

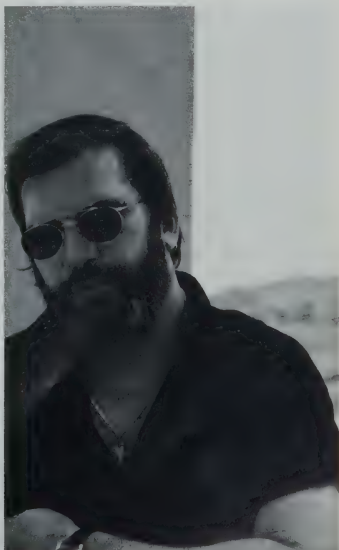
Various Artists: *Classic Blues vol. 2* (Smithsonian Folkways): Those who don't want to be scared by hellhounds, death, and eerie moaning can get a kinder dose of acoustic blues with this archival sampler. It isn't the most stellar Smithsonian compilation, but it holds up on its historical merits. While the bulk of the material is carried by likes of the very much dead Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Big Bill Broonzy, and Roscoe Holcomb, for cross cultural purposes they also include a more than decent version of *Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor* by the very much alive Lucinda Williams. The surprise hit, incidentally, is Barbara Dane's furious guitar fingerpicking on *Way Behind the Sun*. — By Bob Keelaghan

Various Artists: *Tex-Mex* (Arc EUCD 1787): This latest sampler of Tex-Mex music draws heavily from the traditional, Texas-style conjunto, as opposed to the more urban and pop-oriented style of tejano, for example. A lot of the big names are here, including Mingo Saldivar, Freddy Fender, Tony de la Rosa, and Santiago Jimenez, Jr. It's nonetheless odd that Eva Ybarra, Los Pinkys, and Flaco Jimenez are each accorded two tracks each while other important pioneers and innovative performers, such as Narciso Martinez and Steve Jordan, are not represented. All tracks come from albums on the Rounder and Hacienda labels, although no more information on the sessions is given. The artists that make up this compilation are worthy of inclusion, although the Los Arcos track is a bit of a throwaway, but the range is a little more narrow than it needed to be. — By Paul E. Comeau

Various Artists: *Martin Scorsese Presents the Blues*, (Sony): For anyone needing a crash course in how blues progressed from its Mississippi Delta origins to Chuck D., this is a classy choice. Those who have already scratched beyond the surface of the genre can pass. The single CD sampler from Scorsese's PBS series pulls out 14 essential tracks by its best known artists like Robert Johnson, B.B. King, and John Mayall while introducing novices to Handy's Memphis Blues Band and Son House. Like a good compilation, it has diversity and flow. The glaring omission, however, is the Rutles. Considering the influence they had on fictional bluesman Blind Lemon Pie, it is a damn shame Scorsese forgot to include them. — By Bob Keelaghan

Various Artists: *Alan Lomax: Blues Songbook*, (Rounder): Word up, deep blues fans. An Alan Lomax compilation is more than a CD, it is a history lesson. This double-CD beats the band with a booklet of extensive liner notes so thick it barely fits in the case and a collection of rare performances that is a who's who of early acoustic blues and boogie. There are priceless takes from heroes Skip James, Muddy Waters, Mississippi Fred McDowell, Son House, and Lead Belly, but the added beauty are the unexpected gems. In this case they are a couple of early tracks the unsung Delta guitarist Honeyboy Edwards, the Cajun drones of Canray Fontenot, and R.L. Burnside long before he got a college rock audience. — By Bob Keelaghan.

Various Artists: *Classic Mountain Songs*, (Smithsonian Folkways): Plowing through a Smithsonian reference source of kick-ass rural musicians named Doc(k) is a pleasure second to making someone else's gums bleed with dental floss. Seriously, Appalachian Mountain musicians transcend conventional country by playing faster and more intensely. They traverse a unique musical space where the country blues and traditional Irish and Scottish music meet. Those who caught the *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* bug should go straight to the source and hear it in the astonishing guitar playing of Doc and Merle Watson or Leslie Riddle, Clarence Ashley's captivating banjo, or the haunting choral strains of the Old Regular Baptist church. — By Bob Keelaghan



Steve Earle

Let the 21st Season
Continue!

January

4 - (Mariposa - tba)

11 - Spraoi

18 - No Cloud - Chris Langan
Weekend of Traditional Irish
Music

25 - A Night Burns' Would Have
Liked with Enoch Kent and a
cast of 1000's

31 - Banjo Special Weekend

February

1 - Banjo Special Weekend
continued

8 - Creeking Tree String
Quartet

15 - (Mariposa - tba)

22 - Vin Garbutt

29 - North Sea Gas

March

7 - Karen Savoka &
Pete Heitzman



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Harry Manx

Sat. February 21st
Kelly Joe Phelps

Sun. February 14th(?)
**Jim Page
Pete Morton**

Sunday March 7th
The McDades

Sunday March 14th
Arrogant Worms

Sunday March 21st
**Laura Smith,
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Thursday, Oct. 16 - Martin Carthy

Sunday, Oct. 19 - Harvey Andrews

Sat. Nov. 1 - Maeve Donnelly & Steve Baughman

Sun. Nov. 30 - Christina Smith & Jean Hewson

Sun. Dec. 21 - Christmas Party

Sun. Jan. 11 - April Verch

Sun. Feb. 15 - Vin Garbutt

Sun. March 14 - Tanglefoot

Sun. April 25 - Brian Pickell Band

Sun. May 16 - Bram Taylor

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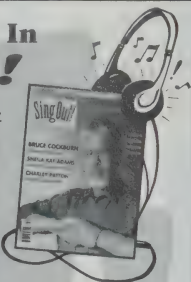
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Hold Your Ground

Words and Music
By
James Keelaghan

D A D A

D A D A

VERSE, VERSE, CHORUS, VERSE, VERSE

D A D A

A

Here's a bit of fun sent to us by Ottawa folk-singer, Tony Turner. Tony sang this at the Penguin Eggs Breakfast at the OCFE conference in Sudbury in October, much to the delight of all in attendance. He kindly let us reprint it here.

The Cover of Penguins Eggs**Music: Dr Hook****New words: Tony Turner**

I'm a simple folk singer, I play a six stringer
I'll jump at any chance to play
I sing about this land and the common man
Sometimes I even get paid
I got a glossy brochure for my western tour
That's not goin' west of Winnipeg
But I'd travel all those miles just to see my smile
On the cover of Penguin Eggs

CHORUS:

Penguin Eggs
Wanna see my picture on the cover
Penguin Eggs
My last chance to be discovered
Penguin Eggs

Wanna see my smilin' face
On the cover of Penguin Eggs

I got a sweet little lady working like crazy
To keep a roof over my head
I got a poor old beat-up Chevy
But soon I'll have a bus like Fred's
'cuz it won't be long before I sell my songs
And I won't have to borrow and beg
But the begging won't be finished until I see my image
On the cover of Penguin Eggs

CHORUS

I got a cute little teenage, blue-eyed daughter
Who says folk music is crap (but I don't care!)
I got the finest studio players
Groovin' on 12 great tracks
All my friends in town laid their money down
Bettin' my career would have legs
And I even hired Richard, but I still can't get my picture
On the cover of Penguin Eggs

CHORUS

13

E

stand and curse the dark. But if we stand to - ge - ther we might
bring its course a - bout. But if we pull to - ge - ther we might
back a - gainst the wall. But if we stand to - ge - ther we might
nev - er quite en - ough. But if we stand to - ge - ther we might

Bm F#m D D D A

15

turn this world a - round ho - ld your ground.
turn this ship a - round ho - ld your ground.
turn this worl a - round ho - ld your ground.

F#m D A F#

18

oh th - is wor - ld is chan - ging, spi - ning out through sp - ace and

chorus D F#m D A

21

time. Oh - - - its r - e ar ran - ging

Bm D G D

24

all the thing we thought were you - rs and mine. You've got to hold your

G G D G G D

27

ground. Hold your ground. Hold your

31

ground. Hold your ground.

Penguin Eggs is determined to cultivate and strengthen a national interest in folk music by printing score sheets to exemplary character contemporary songs considered written in a traditional style. James Keelaghan's *Hold Your Ground* certainly falls into that category. It can be found on his disc, *My Skies*, which won a Juno Award in 1994 in the Roots & Traditional category. Not only is it a great song, but it also has such an eternally optimistic message for these troubled times. James very kindly allowed us to reprint it here. And much thanks to John Minter for transcribing the notes and words.

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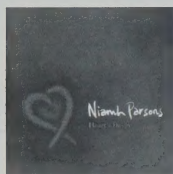
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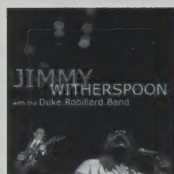
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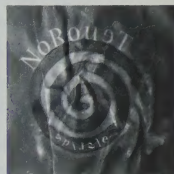
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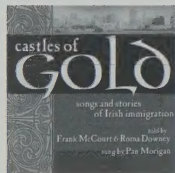
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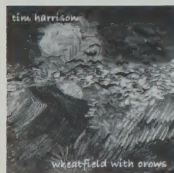
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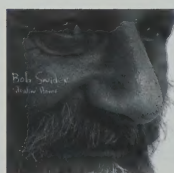
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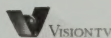
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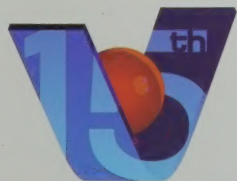


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